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# PHILOSOPHICAL LEGACIES

Essays on the Thought of  
Kant, Hegel, and Their  
Contemporaries

*Daniel O. Dahlstrom*



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**STUDIES IN PHILOSOPHY  
AND THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY**

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and Their Contemporaries**

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Daniel O. Dahlstrom

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To my mother, Lillian Alexandria Ignas  
and my father, Joseph Vincent Dahlstrom



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## Preface

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The essays collected in this volume are studies of aspects of the philosophies of Kant, Hegel, and their contemporaries. They are essays and studies in the original senses of these terms, “attempts to assay” (*essayer*) these philosophies, born of an “enthusiasm” (*studium*) for their achievements. Together, these studies demonstrate the diverse and influential philosophical legacies variously inherited and spawned by one of the most fertile eras of German thought. Kant’s monumental transcendental philosophy, the subject of the first three essays, gives a decisive shape to arguably the central legacy of his own era and ours, i.e., a legacy of critical rationality and ethico-political self-determination. But the same era also witnessed the rise of extremely influential legacies in sharp disagreement with the constraints placed by Kant on the sources of knowledge, duty, appreciation, and belief. These legacies, the subject of the next three essays in the volume, are fashioned by some of Kant’s most prominent contemporary critics: Jacobi, Hamann, Herder, and Schiller. Jacobi’s legacy, relatively neglected today but highly important at the time, is that of combining an epistemological realism with the demands of faith and tradition. Directly challenging widespread dismissals of the epistemic and ethical value of art, tradition, and historical experience, Hamann, Herder, and Schiller leave a legacy of aesthetic holism taken up by German romanticists and idealists alike.

Most of the remainder of the essays of the volume are concerned with the philosophical legacies of Hegel, the most influential German idealist. In the seventh and eighth essays I examine how Hegel fashions a new metaphysical legacy through a critical encounter with the formalism that he sees as regnant in modern philosophy, itself a failed response, in his view, to the Reformation as the religious legacy informing modernity. In the ninth and tenth essays I turn to the controversial legacy of Hegel’s thoughts on the sexual basis of ethical life and on the place of individual conscience in the public domain. Hegel’s appropriation of Kant’s teleological views serves as my springboard, in the eleventh essay, for considering whether, despite their diverse rejections of evolution-

ary thinking, there is any place for the legacy of their teleological thinking in contemporary evolutionary theory. The enormity of Hegel's philosophical legacy in the past two centuries is due in significant measure to Karl Marx's critical appropriation of it. By Marx's own admission, a key to that appropriation and his historical materialism is Feuerbach's exposé of the supposedly real, "material basis" of Hegel's metaphysical labors, an exposé that I track and challenge in the twelfth essay.

In the final three essays I turn more directly to contemporary developments for which German idealist thought forms an important backdrop and, I argue, a still fruitful source. In the thirteenth essay I discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Fukuyama's influential adaptation of Hegel's conception of the end of history to the interpretation of political changes in the early 1990s. In the fourteenth essay I turn to various philosophical responses to contemporary art, not least Danto's attempt to enlist a revised version of Hegel's thesis about the end of art to characterize the current blurring of any difference between art and philosophy. I discuss these responses in the context of the ways in which art takes on the rubrics of a religion in much of contemporary life. My central aim in the piece is to indicate the potential significance of German idealist thinking about art—particularly on the part of Schelling—for contemporary philosophy of art in light of these developments. In the fifteenth and final essay I attempt to take stock of Hegel's legacy at the beginning of the twenty-first century, particularly in the wake of Derrida's ambiguous deconstruction of Hegelian thought. Playing on that ambiguity, I argue that Hegel's legacy remains very much alive, not least because it refuses to take refuge in—to defer to—ambiguity.

The essays involve a good deal of tracking and backtracking of the importance of earlier thinkers for later thinkers (for example, the importance of the thought of Kant for Jacobi and Schiller; that of Hamann and Herder for Schelling and Hegel; that of Hegel for Feuerbach, Fukuyama, and Derrida, and so on). Historicizing in this way is, of course, potentially endless but, if done right, almost always illuminating. However, I try to keep these historicizing tendencies in check, since the main, admittedly pretentious focus of each essay is to indicate and, in some cases, critically weigh the respective philosophical legacies examined, their legacies not only for German thinking during this era, but for philosophical thinking in the present.

All of the essays contained in this volume have been previously published as articles, though I have revised and modified them a bit, occasionally adding a comment on the basis of subsequent reflection or more recent developments in research on the theme and area under consideration. The order of the essays does not correspond to the order

in which they were originally published (which can be determined from the Acknowledgments, below). Instead the order is roughly chronological, beginning with essays on the thought of Kant and that of some of his prominent contemporary critics—Hamann, Herder, Jacobi, Schiller—before moving on to the thought of Hegel and Feuerbach, and ending with a treatment of the significance of Hegel and Schelling for contemporary philosophical thinking.

Most of these essays were composed during my tenure at the School of Philosophy at the Catholic University of America and I am particularly grateful to all my colleagues and students during this period, from whom I learned so much and whose writings continue to instruct me. I would like to give special thanks to Professor Jude Dougherty, emeritus dean of the School of Philosophy at the Catholic University of America, for his encouragement and support of my research over the years and, in particular, of the present volume. For valuable readings of an early draft of the essays, I would like to thank in particular Tim Brownlee, Ingvild Tørsen, and the two individuals who anonymously reviewed the manuscript for the Catholic University of America Press. I have not been able to respond adequately to all of their insightful criticisms but my attempts to do so have invariably made this collection better than it would have been. I would also like to thank Kenneth Haynes for helping me interpret a particular passage from Hamann correctly.



## Abbreviations for Editions Cited

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Following are abbreviations of works frequently cited in the notes. Full citations can be found in the bibliography.

### WORKS BY KANT

- KrV*    *Kritik der reinen Vernunft (Critique of Pure Reason)*, first and second editions signified by A and B
- KpV*    *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft (Critique of Practical Reason)*, page number(s) from volume 5 of *Kants gesammelte Schriften*
- KU*    *Kritik der Urteilskraft (Critique of Judgment)*, page number(s) from volume 5 of *Kants gesammelte Schriften*

Other references to Kant's works are cited as *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, volume and page numbers from the Akademie Ausgabe.

### WORKS BY HEGEL

- Enzyklopädie*    *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*, volume and page numbers from *Gesammelte Werke*, volume 20
- Gesammelte Werke*    *Gesammelte Werke. Kritische Ausgabe*
- Philosophie der Geschichte*    *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*
- Vorlesungen*    *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte (Berlin 1822/1823)*
- Werke*    *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*

### TRANSLATIONS

All translations are my own. However, references to English translations of the *Wissenschaft der Logik*, the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, and the

*Enzyklopädie* are frequently given in the footnotes in parentheses following the reference to the corresponding German text:

*HL*     *Hegel's Logic*

*HPM*   *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind*

*HPN*   *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*

*HPS*   *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*

*HSL*   *Hegel's Science of Logic*

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- “Knowing How and Kant’s Theory of Schematism.” In *The Philosophy of Immanuel Kant*, edited by Richard Kennington. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1985, 71–85.
- “The Natural Right of Equal Opportunity in Kant’s Civil Union.” *Southern Journal of Philosophy* 23, no. 3 (1985): 295–303.
- “Kant and Jacobi.” In *Proceedings of the Eighth International Kant Congress* 1, pt. 3, edited by H. Robinson et al. Milwaukee, Wis.: Marquette University Press, 1995, 907–28.
- “Aesthetic Holism of Hamann, Herder, and Schiller.” In *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, edited by Karl Ameriks. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 76–94.
- “Schiller’s Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Mankind.” In *Classics in Western Philosophy*, edited by Jorge Gracia, Gregory Reichberg, and Bernard Schumacher. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003, 357–63.
- “Hegel’s Science of Logic and Idea of Truth.” *Idealistic Studies* 13, no. 1 (1983): 33–49.
- “Mutual Need and Frustration: Religion and Philosophy in the Modern Era.” *The Thomist* 47, no. 3 (1983): 339–63.
- “The Sexual Basis of Moral Life.” In *Hermeneutics and the Tradition*. Lancaster, Pa.: Wickersham, 1989, 202–10.
- “The Dialectic of Conscience and the Necessity of Morality in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*.” *The Owl of Minerva* 24, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 181–89.
- “Hegel’s Appropriation of Kant’s Account of Teleology in Nature.” In *Hegel and the Philosophy of Nature* edited by Stephen Houlgate. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998, 167–88.



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"Human Nature and the Post-Historical Crisis of Recognition." In *Human Nature*, edited by Lee Rouner. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998, 28-42.

"The Religion of Art." In *Philosophy and Art*, edited by D. O. Dahlstrom. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991, 235-54.

"Hegel's Questionable Legacy." *Research in Phenomenology* 32 (2002): 3-25.

## PHILOSOPHICAL LEGACIES

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## Chapter 1

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# THE UNITY OF KANT'S CRITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Apart from the trivial senses of having been written by the same individual, in the same language, and with the same general style and structure, at the same place (Königsberg) and during roughly the same period (the Enlightenment), there is considerable controversy as to the extent to which some sort of underlying unity may be ascribed to the doctrines elaborated in Kant's three critiques. There are those who, like the great German idealists and materialists (I am thinking of Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Marx, respectively) seem certain that they have found the key to such a unity, but at the cost of erecting and thereby transforming the insights of Kant's critical philosophy into a kind of absolute science. Others, for example, those of a more Aristotelian or of a more positivist stripe, are just as convinced that, in the wake of Kant's defense of mechanical explanations in natural science and his deconstruction of traditional metaphysics, Kant's talk of morality and aesthetics, teleology and religion, is simply inconsistent and purely apologetic. Still others, not unsympathetic to Kant's philosophical project, look outside his critical works to his essays on history and politics in order to uncover the underlying unity to his thought.<sup>1</sup> Interpretations of this sort heed Kant's own view that it is possible to understand a thinker or writer better than the thinker or writer herself does. The aim of the following paper is, however, more modest, though no less daunting and controversial. The aim is to try to understand how Kant himself, at least at a certain point, namely, at the end of the critical decade of the 1780s, perceived the unity of his system. Before turning to this task, it may be useful to indicate some reasons why there might be something to be gained

1. For Yirmiah Yovel the reintegration of a concept of rational history (based upon Kant's short essays on historical subjects) into Kant's system reveals a "historical antinomy" within that system; see Yirmiah Yovel, *Kant and the Philosophy of History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 271f.

by such an undertaking. One central reason is the way in which Kant, in coming to this self-understanding, wrestles with the very tensions that define contemporary culture.

A great part of our lives is dominated by the juggernaut of science and technology. In contrast to centuries past, we look to the institution of science and not religion in matters concerning the truth about nature in general. Increasingly science uncovers how nature at microscopic and macroscopic levels, in our genetic make-up and in various ecosystems, decisively influences our lives and well-being. Not unconnected with this march of science, every day our lives seem to become a little more dependent upon a thick web of technologies: technologies of energy, production, medicine, communication, and defense.

At the same time, we have a keen sense of the limits of science and technology, namely, the dense reality and inscrutable fates of individuals. Science is, for the most part, concerned with individual phenomena only as confirming or disconfirming instances of theories always developed at some level of generality. When an individual who is supposed to be in a particular species or class exhibits anomalous or aberrant behavior, this is of interest to the scientist, but only as the promise of a new classification, the determination of a new type. Similarly, individuals have an undeniable place within technologies but only as interchangeable parts. Technologies are typically constructed for human beings in general or for communities or even for types of individuals (for example, the disabled), but not for individuals as such. There are, to be sure, important exceptions to this rule (notable in the application of some medical technologies such as prosthetic surgery). Nevertheless, social and economic constraints require that technologies aim principally for a common, not an individual, good.

Perhaps, then, it is not so strange that our culture at least to some extent sets limits to science and technology. However, setting these limits is due to more than just the fact that science and technology, however beneficial they are for individuals, inevitably construe individuals in terms of generalities. Our moral and legal traditions positively affirm the radical integrity and significance of the individual, ascribing it distinctive rights and responsibilities. Despite the overwhelming evidence of physiology and marketing research and even despite the increasing appeal to psychiatrists' testimony, courts still purport to judge people on the basis of the intentions and degree of freedom discernible in their decisions and actions. We hold ourselves, lovers, friends, and family accountable even if we are also able to forgive. But both holding accountable and forgiving ourselves and others make sense only if there is some-

thing that is supposed to be done and only if we are free to do what we are supposed to do.

We seem, in effect, to live in two incompatible worlds. There is the world of science that explains how things in nature in general come about and thus how generic things can be made to come about. The world of science holds great, indeed undoubtedly the best, promise of mastering nature or—if the idea of such promise is an overly and dangerously pretentious dream—at least of maximizing our place in nature. Yet it seems just as surely to be ultimately in mortal conflict with any notion of the sort of individual accountability and freedom presupposed by our moral heritage. The world of morality and religion, moreover, holds out to us a promise incontestably greater than that of science, namely, the promise of final justice and an immortal destiny.

If this scenario rings true at all for our contemporary culture, then Immanuel Kant is very much our contemporary. Kant, more than any other philosopher, suspends human existence between the claims of science and those of morality. The problem of the unity of his critical philosophy is nothing less than the problem of the unity of our culture, our contemporary existence. In order, however, to appreciate Kant's own solution to this problem, it is first necessary to see how he formulates the problem. This task, as already noted, is quite formidable since it requires an overview of, at the very least, his three critiques. Moreover, in addition to the substantive question of the unity of the contents of the three critiques, there is the historical fact that, if there is such a unity, it was a developing one. For, in the first place, there is no reason to think that Kant envisioned a system in the form of the three critiques when he penned the final lines to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, published in 1781. The *Critique of Practical Reason* does not take shape until about the time he is revising the first critique, six years later. More significantly, in the first critique he denies the very possibility of a critique of taste, basing his denial on the fact that rules or criteria for evaluating the beautiful are merely empirical. It is accordingly somewhat surprising that, in a letter to Reinhold dated December 28, 1787, he writes that he is at work on a critique of taste and has discovered "another type of a priori principles." Moreover, within the following two years the critique of taste becomes only the first half of the eventual *Critique of Judgment*, as the principles of the latter are extended to teleological as well as aesthetic judgments.

Nevertheless, once the third critique was completed, Kant proceeded to give his readers some important clues regarding the unity of the critical system. Each of his critiques—together with the "fourth" critique, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*—can be viewed as providing an

answer to one of the three questions that, in his view, every philosopher worthy of the name should address:

What can I know?

What should I do?

What may I hope for?

In what follows, as a means of stating the problem and addressing the unity of Kant's critical philosophy on its own terms, the arguments and conclusions of each of Kant's three critiques are summed up as an answer to one of these three questions respectively.

1. "*What can I know?*" In 1781, at the age of fifty-seven and after a decade of relative quiet for so prolific a philosophical writer, Kant published the *Critique of Pure Reason*. There, countering what he considered a skeptical challenge to the legitimacy of pure and applied mathematics as well as the legitimacy of a theoretical science of nature, Kant set out to demonstrate what makes these disciplines possible. Boldly proposing that space and time are forms of human sensibility and that the fundamental concepts of theoretical knowledge can be derived from the logical acts of human understanding, Kant explained how arithmetic, geometry, and chronometry are intuitively necessary, how scientists, carpenters, and engineers can successfully apply the ideal character of mathematics to the real world, and how everything studied by the natural sciences is linked together—at least at a certain level—in a chain of causal mechanisms.

Kant's explanation was novel because, unlike his more rationalist predecessors, he grounded the pretensions of mathematics and physics to universality and necessity, not in some grand metaphysical scheme of God and nature, but rather in an analysis of human subjectivity, specifically, the cognitive capacities of the human subject, construed as the conditions of any possible experience. This new sort of grounding (he called it "transcendental") distinguished him from the likes of Leibniz and Wolff in other ways as well. From the fact that human cognitive capacities—basically, the understanding and the imagination—are finite, he drew the inference that the validity of mathematics and theoretical natural science is inherently linked and thereby also limited to the phenomenal world, that is to say, to the world as it appears or insofar as it can be experienced. At the same time, this combined justification and limitation of science implied the illegitimacy of the speculative science known as "metaphysics," insofar as it claims to know or to be able to demonstrate the nature of things in themselves beyond the phenomenal order. From the theoretical point of view of legitimate sciences, the traditional themes of speculative metaphysics—an immaterial and po-

tentially immortal soul, spatial or temporal beginnings or ends of the universe, freedom, and a first cause or supreme being—are, in Kant's technical jargon, simply ideas, empty concepts referring to what lies beyond any possible experience. These ideas are generated by a pretension of pure reason to make theoretical claims about objects solely on the basis of its otherwise quite legitimate capacity to make and determine valid inferences a priori. Hence, Kant names his masterpiece the *Critique of Pure Reason* to underscore its objective of demonstrating that such ideas as those of the soul, the beginning of time, and God, as products of pure reason, are neither verifiable nor falsifiable.

At the same time, Kant labors to show how these ideas are perfectly natural, inevitable, and useful, even "indispensable." They serve to remind science at each stage of its development that the greatest possible unity (homogeneity, specificity, and continuity) to its research always lies ahead of it.<sup>2</sup> These ideas have no transcendental use, that is to say, they provide us with no knowledge of objects, but they have an immanent, heuristic use. They constitute the indispensable but usually tacit assumption of all empirical research, namely, that nature as it is actually experienced conforms to our attempts to understand it in a logically coherent manner. There is, moreover, another purpose that, in Kant's eyes, is served by his critique of the ideas of pure reason. By showing that the idea of God can be neither proven nor disproven, he claims to have freed religion from speculation and thereby removed any possibility of an atheistic objection to it.<sup>3</sup>

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, then, the truncated answer to the question "What can I know?" is that I can know the truth of claims made in the theoretical disciplines of pure and applied mathematics and physics, but I cannot know the truth of claims made by speculative metaphysics.

2. "What should I do?" With the publication of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, however, Kant's critical activity was only beginning. That immortality, freedom, and God, as ideas and thus neither provable nor disprovable, cannot themselves be matters of knowledge, leaves open the possibility that they are matters of faith.<sup>4</sup> Yet, if it is not possible to determine the truth about these ideas on the basis of theoretical or speculative reason, why should we believe in them? Kant gives his answer to this question in his second critique, the *Critique of Practical Reason*, published in 1788. Unlike the first critique, the *Critique of Practical Reason* is concerned with reason, not as a capacity to know (*Erkenntnisvermögen*), but

2. KrVA321–32/B378–89, A642–45/B670–73, A657f./B685f.

3. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, XXIII, 59.

4. KrVBxxx.



as a capacity to determine the will (*Begehrungsvermögen*).<sup>5</sup> The “will” here signifies something quite private and intimate, the interior of a person’s desires, intentions, and choices, regardless of whether they are realized or not. In the *Critique of Practical Reason* Kant argues not simply that reason has a capacity to determine the will but that the will is free only when it is determined to act by a rational principle. In other words, a person is self-determining or free to the extent that his or her choices are in fact determined by a principle issuing from his or her reason alone and not by anything given, that is to say, not by any combination of physiological and/or psychological conditioning.

The moral law, Kant argues, is just such a principle. In other words, by formulating the moral law, Kant is answering the question “What should I do?” but this answer is at the same time an acknowledgment of the possibility of freedom. To be sure, how a free will is possible remains for Kant “a problem that human reason cannot resolve”; freedom is, as he puts it, an “inscrutable” fact.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, what I should do is act in such a way that what motivates me personally could at the same time serve as a law for everyone or, what for Kant amounts to the same, I should treat humanity, in myself and others, always as the purpose of my actions, always as an end and never merely as a means. The universality of the moral law in the first formulation of the categorical imperative and the reference to humanity in the second formulation testify to an ideal that is not given in experience. Instead, this ideal, a world in which we treat each other with mutual respect as persons and not things, a world in which our wills are not so much subject to nature as nature is subject to our wills, can only be an imperative of reason, a law it imposes on itself.<sup>7</sup>

The moral law, so construed, does not tell us to be happy; a conception of happiness is always a product of experience, inevitably based upon some mix of physiological make-up, psychological factors, and so-

5. *KpV* 15f., 44f. Not to be overlooked, however, is the fact that Kant indicates the relation between his theoretical and practical philosophy already at the conclusion to the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the three sections of the “Canon of Pure Reason” in the doctrine of method at the conclusion of the book.

6. *KpV* 72; *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VI, 21, 24, 43. Between 1785 and 1788 Kant gives up the task of grounding the metaphysics of morals, at least the sort of deduction of the moral law proposed in the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, in favor of presupposing consciousness of the moral law as a “*Faktum der Vernunft*” at the outset of the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*. See Klaus Düsing, *Subjektivität und Freiheit* (Stuttgart–Bad Canstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2002), 229.

7. *KpV* 31, 44. Of course, it is questionable whether this ideal is not in some sense given in experience or, even if it is, whether it cannot be the product of some sort of physiological and/or psychological factors. If Kant’s appeal to a spontaneity in human beings is itself ultimately no more than a postulate, then the integrity of the moral philosophy seems to be severely undermined.

cial conditioning. Insofar as choices are motivated by such a conception, they are not free choices. Nor can a conception of happiness, properly speaking, serve as a basis for morality with a pretense to more than a merely relative or conditional validity. There is a notorious difference of opinion among individuals and cultures as to what happiness is. But, on Kant's analysis, instead of instructing us to be happy or maximize our happiness, the moral law demands categorically—with no “ifs, ands, or buts”—that we act in such a way as to be worthy of happiness, without promise of the same.<sup>8</sup> The moral law is not about what is or will be, but about what ought to be. As Kant also puts it, virtue and happiness are two completely different things.<sup>9</sup> In other words, questions of morality, of what I should do, are not questions of happiness nor is there anything in the moral law that insures our happiness if our actions are in fact determined by what the moral law dictates.

However, while not promising happiness and not being able to guarantee the realization of what ought to be, the concept of moral law presupposes at least that it is possible, more or less, to carry out its imperatives. (“If I *should*, then I *can*.”) Our understanding of what is right and wrong enjoins us to act a certain way, regardless of the consequences and regardless of whether or not we in fact do so, but it also postulates that we are free to act this way and that the natural order can be morally transformed. But to suppose such a compatibility between morality and nature is tantamount to postulating that nature itself is the work of an intelligent being, God. “It is morally necessary,” as Kant puts it, “to assume the existence of God.”<sup>10</sup> Or else we must “regard moral laws as empty fantasies.”<sup>11</sup>

There exists some controversy among Kant scholars as to the exact force of this moral necessity to postulate God's existence.<sup>12</sup> The difficulty is that, on the one hand, Kant clearly states that someone unconvinced of God's existence cannot on that account consider himself excused from the demands of the moral law.<sup>13</sup> In Kant's view, atheists and agnostics are, no less than believers, bound to the moral law. On the other hand, Kant just as clearly affirms that “morality leads unavoidably to religion, by virtue of which it expands to the idea of a powerful, moral lawgiver outside the human being, in whose will there is that final

8. KrVA806/B834.

9. KpV 112.

10. KpV 115, 124ff.

11. KrVA811/B839.

12. Allen Wood, *Kant's Moral Religion* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), 26–30; L. W. Beck, *A Commentary on Kant's Critique of Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 235f.; Yovel, *Kant and the Philosophy of History*, 41–80; Niels Otto Schroll-Fleischer, *Der Gottesgedanke in der Philosophie Kants* (Denmark: Odense University Press, 1981), 137–49.

13. KpV 45of.

purpose (of the creation of the world), which at the same time can and should be the final purpose of the human being."<sup>14</sup>

The fact that Kant re-formulated this issue of the relation between morality and religious belief so many times and in so many ways suggests that, if he was not himself unsure about it, he was at least aware that it presented a potential difficulty to his readers. His official view seems to be that the relation between morality and religious belief presents no problem as long as we keep distinct what the moral law tells us we ought to do and what implications we can theoretically draw from the fact that there is such a moral imperative.<sup>15</sup> From a purely practical point of view, moral obligations need not, indeed cannot, be based upon religious beliefs about providence or about future rewards and punishment. Such beliefs subvert the freedom of the action, substituting happiness for worthiness of happiness as the motive of the action. As Kant puts it in his lectures on moral philosophy, "The human being can hope to be happy, yet that must not move him, but rather only console him."<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Kant claims that if we could arrive at knowledge of God's existence, "all morality would dissipate: and images of reward and punishment would take the place of genuinely moral motivation."<sup>17</sup> At the same time, from a theoretical point of view, having accepted moral obligations on their own merits, it is possible, even inevitable that we ask what is implied by carrying out moral imperatives. The worthiness to be happy implies the possibility of happiness and the demand for a moral order implies that the natural order is in fact amenable to moral transformation.

In this way, according to Kant, it is the concept of the moral law that gives us reason to believe that we are free and that there is an intelligible author of nature. Despite the "infinite chasm" between what we can know and what we should do, between a science that supposes that everything in nature is determined and a morality that supposes the freedom and autonomy of persons, the conclusions of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and those of the *Critique of Practical Reason* are not only consistent, but complementary.<sup>18</sup> While neither provable nor disprovable by science, the theoretically empty, but noncontradictory ideas of freedom and divinity acquire what positive content they have from the implications of adherence to the moral law.<sup>19</sup> For we cannot seriously entertain acting

14. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VI, 6.

15. *KrVA*805/B833. Whether bad faith in this respect can be avoided is, of course, another question altogether.

16. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, XXVII, 1, 284.

17. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, XXVIII, 2.2.1083f.

18. *KpV* 48ff.; at *KpV* 54f. Kant says that a practical, not a theoretical, aim lies behind the dissatisfaction with the application of causality merely to objects of experience.

19. *KpV* 136; *KrVA*807f./B835f.

morally without "postulating" that we are free, responsible agents and that nature is ultimately not hostile to morality, in other words, without postulating that nature is the work of an intelligent, benevolent creator. In Kant's technical jargon the ideas of freedom and divinity are postulates, propositions that we can theoretically entertain but not prove and yet at the same time propositions that are inseparably connected to an a priori, unconditionally valid law—the moral law.<sup>20</sup> As postulates, they in no way expand the scope of our knowledge about the nature of things; there is no theoretical knowledge of the existence of freedom, immortality, or a benevolent creator, but a purely rational belief in them is implied by the moral law.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, even if we are persuaded to allow Kant the consistency and complementarity of these conclusions to his first two *Critiques* (that is to say, his theoretical and practical philosophy or, as it might be expressed today, his philosophy of science and his moral philosophy), we must concede that that consistency and complementarity have been purchased at the cost of ascribing any *theoretical* or *practical* (moral) unity to the critical philosophy and, thereby, to the conception of human subjectivity lying at the basis of Kant's entire project. By distinguishing between the world as it appears and as it may be in itself, Kant effectively secures both science's theoretical determinations and morality's free choices, but only at the expense of suspending the human individual eerily on a tightrope of faith between these two realms. Insofar as I consider myself under the lens of science, my existence is fully determined by the state of my body in nature. Yet, at the same time, the moral traditions of my culture, my interpersonal relations, and ultimately my conscience tell me that I have to act as a responsible agent, treating others not as things to be used, but as themselves persons, responsible agents. In other words, without knowing how this is possible, I must be able by acting morally to have an effect on the natural order that, in the eyes of science, is completely determined.<sup>22</sup> Nature must at least afford us a way of thinking about it that conforms to moral imperatives. Of course, Kant's argument is that, if I recognize the necessity and validity of this moral law, then I do not know, but have reason to believe in a providence, a divine order providing for the ultimate harmony of nature and morality. Note, however, that this faith is a faith based upon practical reason or morality. If you will permit me to indulge a metaphor, that

20. *KpV* 122.

21. *KpV* 142–46.

22. It would be useful, at this juncture, to consider Kant's notion of respect, the "pineal gland" of his moral philosophy, since respect for the moral law has real consequences in the natural realm.

tightrope of faith, on which we are suspended between nature and freedom, science and morality, seems to be secured only on one side.

3. “*What may I hope for?*” In the third and final installment of his critical philosophy, the *Critique of Judgment*, published in 1790, (and the *Religion* work of 1793) Kant addresses these very concerns.<sup>23</sup> As the title suggests, there is a parallel between this critique and its predecessors. In the first critique Kant inquires into the a priori principles of knowing and finds such principles in the imagination and understanding. In the second critique he searches for an a priori principle of desire and motivation and locates the source of such a principle—the moral law—in pure practical reason. Similarly, in the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant inquires whether there is an a priori principle of our feelings, specifically, our feelings of pleasure and displeasure, and he uncovers such a principle in the power of judgment. The identification of this a priori principle of judgment completes the critical philosophy in more than one sense. Not only is it the third and final transcendental principle within the critical philosophy, but it is also the basis for any “transition” (*Übergang*) between the other two principles or, in short, between nature and freedom (morality).<sup>24</sup>

That transcendental principle of judgment is the principle of purposiveness. In both introductions to the *Critique of Judgment* Kant establishes this principle in general before turning to specific types of purposiveness. His argument for this principle, which may seem strange to those who think of Kant as a proponent of Newtonian mechanics, is based upon a consideration of what is presupposed by empirical research of nature or what he also calls “reflective judgment” on nature as it is experienced. The first critique has already established that nature in general is a network of causal mechanisms. But actual research of nature presupposes far more than that. Inasmuch as it begins with particular facts or data that present themselves, the researcher reflects on them, comparing them among themselves or with his own capacity to apprehend them, in order to locate some general principles or order in terms of which those facts can be understood.<sup>25</sup> (Research that begins with particular data is, in Kant’s technical jargon, the work of “reflective judgment.”) Research tacitly presupposes that such common principles can be found throughout nature and across diverse species, that there is some sort of continuity from one domain to the next, and that nature—not only in regard to its very general, theoretical laws, but also in

23. *KU* 175f.

24. See the appendix to this paper.

25. *KU* 179ff.; see also Klaus Düsing, *Die Teleologie in Kants Weltbegriff*, 2nd expanded ed. (Bonn: Bouvier, 1986), 51–65.

regard to more specific, empirical laws—allows for endless specification. In short, the scientist researching nature presupposes that nature specifies itself in a way that conforms with the scientist's own methods and ways of studying nature.<sup>26</sup> “Thus,” as Kant puts it, “[reflective] judgment must assume for its own use as a principle a priori that what is contingent, as far as human insight is concerned, in the particular (empirical) laws of nature contains a lawlike unity . . . that for us, to be sure, cannot be grounded, but is thinkable. . . . This transcendental concept of a purposiveness of nature is, then, neither a concept of nature nor a concept of freedom, since it attributes nothing at all to the object (of nature), but only represents the sole way we have to proceed in reflection on objects of nature in regard to a thoroughgoing, coherent experience.”<sup>27</sup>

In order to research nature or, in Kant's terminology, in order to be able to reflect on the specific data and facts of nature in the hope of finding some general order among them, we have to presume that nature will co-operate, that it is somehow attuned to this process. This principle of purposiveness is “the concept of nature as art, in other words, nature's technology,” the presumption that nature has some underlying purpose, a conception unifying it at every level and in every part of it, including that part known as “human nature” and that activity known as “scientific research.”<sup>28</sup> In short, research demands that nature be construed as though it were a work of technology or art.

The scientist's need to presume nature's purposiveness, its basic conformity to the scientist's own aims, amounts to investigating the particular laws of nature *as if* some sort of intellect—quite unlike our own intellect—had imparted those laws. The presupposition that there is an intelligible order to the phenomena investigated implies the *idea* of an intellect, a divine or divine-like intellect, as the basis of that order. Setting it off against our own discursive intellects, Kant calls it the “intuitive intellect” (or “understanding,” given that the German *Verstand* is Baumgarten's translation for the Latin *intellectus*). This idea of an intuitive intellect, based as it is upon science's need to presume the purposiveness of nature, in no way, of course, provides a proof of God's existence. However, it does provide some more positive content to the idea and additional reason to believe in God's existence.<sup>29</sup>

26. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, XX, 215; *KU* 410f.

27. *KU* 183f.

28. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, XX, 204f., 219; *KU* 410f.

29. *KU* 180f., 406. The notion of an intuitive intellect or understanding is a favorite theme of Hegel's interpretation of Kant. From his earliest to his latest published remarks on Kant's philosophy, Hegel repeatedly takes up the theme of intuitive understanding in a positive way. Unlike Kant, he does not construe it as a mere idea of reflective judgment, but as an approximation of a genuine human cognitive capability.

Yet what does this principle of purposiveness have to do with pleasure? Recall that in Kant's scheme of the systematic unity of his critical philosophy he construes the principle of purposiveness as an a priori principle neither of knowing nor of willing, but of the feelings of pleasure and displeasure, and that as such it is supposed to make possible the transition between those other principles of the system or, in short, between nature and freedom. In order to explain how the presumption of nature's purposiveness is an a priori principle of our feelings of pleasure and displeasure, Kant first points out that the successful resolution of research is as much dependent upon nature's co-operation as it is upon our own research schemes. When research succeeds, it is accompanied, not simply by the joy of discovery and accomplishment, but more importantly by a more resilient kind of pleasure, the pleasure of wonder or amazement (*Bewunderung*) in having our expectations confirmed and the aims of our research (more or less) realized. This distinctive pleasure (reminiscent of *thaumazein*, for both Plato and Aristotle the source of philosophy itself)<sup>30</sup> thus presupposes the principle of purposiveness.<sup>31</sup> We are delighted and amazed that nature, despite its immense diversity, to some degree conforms and discloses itself to our capacity to grasp it. (Kant concedes that in the ordinary course of studying nature the pleasure we take in being able to grasp nature gradually becomes so mixed with the mere knowledge of nature that it may no longer be particularly noticeable.) Nevertheless, not only is empirical research possible only on the supposition that nature will comply with the researcher's efforts to come to grips with nature, but this compliance itself is the source of a distinctive kind of pleasure.

There are, in addition, two different kinds of purposiveness, two distinctive ways in which nature presents itself to us that we cannot judge otherwise than as if nature acted according to a purpose and that, when we make these judgments, produce (respectively) a distinctive kind of pleasure in us. The two parts of the *Critique of Judgment*, the critique of aesthetic judgment and the critique of teleological judgment, are devoted to these two kinds of purposiveness respectively. When we come across some beautiful form in nature, a sunset or a waterfall, its beauty is quite independent of whether we scientifically understand it or whether it promotes our moral character or whether it gratifies some physiological craving. In fact, natural beauties do not seem to serve any purpose at all and yet we cannot help but judge them as if they were the fulfillment of some purpose.

30. Cf. *Theatetus* 155d and *Metaphysics*, I, 2, 982b12f.

31. *KU* 187.



Aesthetic judgments are not cognitive judgments and the purposiveness involved in experiences of the beautiful is strictly "subjective." Beauty is not simply in the eye of the beholder for Kant, but it is also not an objective property of things. Rather it is a property of the forms of certain things in relation to the human subject, forms that put the mind's ability to imagine and to understand in a kind of free play that is irreducible to a single image or concept. Thus, while the disinterested pleasure we take in beauty does not involve any extension of our knowledge of nature, it is still a pleasure intrinsically involved with our cognitive capacities and specifically with their enhancement, short of cognitive closure or resolution. Hence, on Kant's account, natural beauty, no less than scientific research, points to the technology or artistry of nature. In his own words, "the self-sufficient natural beauty uncovers for us a technology of nature which represents nature as a system according to laws, the principle of which we do not encounter in the entire capacity of our understanding, namely, the principle of a purposiveness with respect to our power of judgment. . . . It, thus, to be sure, does not actually extend our knowledge of objects of nature, but it nevertheless does extend our concept of nature as a mere mechanism to the concept of it as art."<sup>32</sup>

In the beautiful and in the sublime Kant finds a subjective basis for a "transition" from the realm of nature to that of morality. While it is necessary, on Kant's analysis, to understand that neither a genuine judgment that something is beautiful nor a feeling that something is sublime is motivated by moral interests any more than it is by the interests of science or sensuality, he also recognizes that both the beautiful and the sublime are "purposeful in relation to moral feeling."<sup>33</sup> "The beautiful," he notes, "prepares us to love something, even nature itself, disinterestedly; the sublime to prize it even against our (sensuous) interest."<sup>34</sup> Beauty, for Kant, is a "symbol of morality," presenting an analogy to morality that is itself universally respected due to the fact that, in a moral judgment, the will is free in its conformity to laws dictated by reason.<sup>35</sup> Given this analogy, Kant concludes, the appreciation of beauty "makes possible the transition from the allurements of the senses to the habitual moral interest without too violent a jump."<sup>36</sup>

There are also things in nature that we have to judge as having a purpose and not simply, like the beautiful, in relation to us, but as it were objectively. Moreover, they are things that, no less than beauties in nature, are sources of wonder and amazement for us. While we generally and legitimately explain things and events in nature mechanically,

32. *KU* 246.

34. *Ibid.*

36. *KU* 354.

33. *KU* 267.

35. *KU* 351ff.



that is, in terms of their antecedent conditions, we also repeatedly come across phenomena for which that mechanical sort of explanation does not appear to suffice. It is absurd, Kant claims, for us to hope that a Newton could emerge who might be able to explain the generation of a blade of grass according to natural laws, without recourse to some notion of purpose.<sup>37</sup> Organic beings, in Kant's view, are the only sort of things in nature that must be regarded as its purposes and that justify the introduction of teleology into natural science.<sup>38</sup> The general principle of the purposiveness of nature is validated by the fact that empirical research (reflection on nature) takes place and by the fact that this is conceivable to us only on the assumption that nature is so structured that it co-operates with that research. The research itself may, however, result only in mechanical explanations of natural phenomena. On the other hand, while it is made possible and even prepared by that general transcendental principle of purposiveness, the principle of organic or objective purposiveness is occasioned and justified for reflective judgment by the appearance of (the fact that there are) organic entities. Rather than being the product of an assemblage of parts or antecedent conditions, the unity of an organism first makes the constitution and reciprocal relations of its parts necessary. The idea of the efficacy of this unity can only be explained by us as a purpose.

On Kant's analysis, then, both the beautiful and the organic can only be judged on the basis, respectively, of subjective and objective purposiveness. As in the case of empirical research in general, we cannot help but relate to certain things and events in nature otherwise than as if they correspond to some purpose, some conception of their outcomes. That is to say, even though we are unable in an absolute sense to say what the purposes of these natural forms and formations are, we are compelled to think of them as if they existed because they serve some purpose—and that is precisely what it means to say that they are “purposive.” This way of relating, moreover, brings a distinctive kind of pleasure, the pleasure of wonder, along with it. Yet, even if all this is granted, what precisely does it have to do with the unity of the critical philosophy, with the transition from nature to freedom, indeed, with the question: What may I hope for?

In order to answer these questions, it is necessary first to remind ourselves that the principle of purposiveness remains regulative, not constitutive for Kant. The need to presuppose a concept of a purpose for empirical research, for appreciation of the beautiful, and for understanding organic life is ultimately based, not on knowledge that there

37. *KU* 400.

38. *KU* 375f.

are such purposes, but on the finitude of the human knower. At the same time, however, the purposiveness of beautiful forms and organic beings illustrate how it is possible to conceive of the unity of nature and freedom, the realms of science and morality. They demonstrate that postulating God's existence, as the source of the compatibility of our natural selves and our moral vocations, is not an empty demand of practical (moral) reason.

Culture itself is defined by Kant as nature's ultimate purpose, "ultimate" because culture is what disciplines and shapes our desires "to make us receptive to purposes higher than nature itself can provide."<sup>39</sup> Along with science, fine art (*schöne Kunst*) is at the center of this cultural process because its pleasures can be shared universally and because it brings a society a certain refinement, a kind of training for the moral rule of reason. Note that fine art contributes to culture not by preaching moral lessons but by promoting a certain disposition, a disposition that suspends a purely physiological relation to nature.

Perhaps now it is possible to appreciate why Kant believed that he had elaborated in the *Critique of Judgment* a principle mediating between the other two critiques. The principle of purposiveness provides a basis for a connection between the theoretical order of science and the practical order of morality, between nature and freedom. This principle is itself neither theoretical nor practical but rather aesthetic (in a broad sense of the term, as he puts it in the unpublished first introduction to the *Critique of Judgment*). The principle does not by itself provide us with knowledge of the nature of things, it does not tell us what we ought to do. But it does explain the distinctive pleasure of wonder and amazement that accompanies scientific research, the experience of beauty, the attempt to understand organic beings, and, even though they have been mentioned here only in passing, the achievements of art and culture. Above all, it is this purposiveness and the pleasures it provides that give us hope.

The unity of Kant's critical philosophy is thus contained in his answer to the question: What may we hope for? According to Kant, we have reason to hope, and not merely to believe, that there is some unity and purpose to human life, that there is some underlying purpose unifying the nature studied by science and the freedom postulated by morality. The reasons for this hope are the fact that scientific research of nature takes place at all and the fact that there are natural beauties and organic beings, facts that are only explicable to us on the assumption that nature acts according to a purpose.

39. *KU* 433.

*Appendix*

Kant's three critiques are, by his own account, supposed to determine the a priori principles of three faculties of the mind: cognition, feelings of pleasure and displeasure, and desire.<sup>40</sup> However, each critique locates its transcendental principle (lawlikeness, purposiveness, final purpose) in a distinctive *cognitive* capacity (understanding, judgment, reason) and with respect to a specific application (nature, art, freedom). What follows is Kant's own "table" or "overview of all major faculties according to their systematic unity." I have numbered the faculties in order to compare them briefly with the questions animating the three critiques.

<i>Faculties of the mind altogether</i>	<i>Cognitive faculties</i>	<i>A priori principles</i>	<i>Application to _____</i>
1. Cognition	Understanding	Lawlikeness	Nature
2. Feeling of pleasure, displeasure	Judgment	Purposiveness	Art
3. Desire	Reason	Final purpose	Freedom

According to this "overview," the answers to the questions "What can I know?" and "What should I do?" are at extremes, though, of course, the two critiques dealing with these questions chronologically precede the *Critique of Judgment*. Yet it should be noted that Kant calls the critique of aesthetic judgment "the propaedeutic of all philosophy."<sup>41</sup> Yet even if, as suggested in this paper, the principle of purposiveness articulated and employed in the *Critique of Judgment* serves both a mediating and propaedeutic role in Kant's philosophy as a whole, helping us to understand its unity, one might still wonder why this principle has to function this way or, for that matter, why the system takes the shape it does. In his Logic lectures, perhaps anticipating this issue and desiring to face it without resorting to speculative metaphysics, Kant adds a fourth question, to which the other three refer: "What is the human being?"<sup>42</sup>

40. This threefold structure, articulated by Mendelssohn and Tetens in the 1770s, has obvious affinities with the Platonic conception of the soul, as Robert Sokolowski reminded me. I am also grateful to Richard Kennington for his line of questioning, challenging the trenchancy of the restrictions placed by Kant upon the notions of purposiveness and history within the critical philosophy.

41. *KU* 194–98.

42. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, IX, 25. No discussion of the possible unity of Kant's critical philosophy can fail to mention his *Opus postumum*. In this connection, see Eckart Förster, *Kant's Final Synthesis: An Essay on the Opus postumum* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000); see, too, my upcoming entries on the notion of system in the *Kant-Lexikon*, ed. Georg Mohr, Jürgen Stolzenberg, and Marcus Willaschek (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2008). For a valuable treatment of the legacy of Kant's fourth question: "Was ist der Mensch?," see Martin Buber, "Das Problem des Menschen," *Werke*, vol. 1: *Schriften zur Philosophie* (Munich: Kösel, 1962), 307–407; a translation of a version of this paper can be found in *Between Man and Man*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smith (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 118–205.

## Chapter 2

# KNOWING HOW AND KANT'S THEORY OF SCHEMATISM

A central purpose of Kant's discussion of schematism in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is to teach us how the power of judgment applies pure concepts of the understanding to appearances.<sup>1</sup> This aim has struck more than one critic as pretty absurd, since it seems to suppose an illegitimate distinction between possessing and being able to apply a concept in the proper way. What can it mean, it is argued, to say that I have a concept if I am not able to use it and, indeed, use it properly?<sup>2</sup>

Agreeing on its superfluity but for a different reason, other critics question the role of the doctrine of schemata following the deduction of the categories. If the transcendental deduction has demonstrated that the categories are a priori applicable to experiences, what need is there for a doctrine of schematism?<sup>3</sup> Disputed by this second line of criticism is a distinction underlying the very structure of Kant's Transcendental Analytic, namely, the distinction between "knowing that" and "knowing how" categories are applicable to experience universally and necessarily.

In the first part of this paper I attempt to show that the first of these criticisms is misdirected since it overlooks differences among the kinds

1. KrVA135/B174. For helpful suggestions on revising this paper I am particularly indebted to Lewis White Beck, Antonio S. Cua, and Ulrich Lange.

2. G. J. Warnock, "Concept and Schematism," *Analysis* 9 (1948–49): 80: "If I cannot apply a concept, then I have not got it." J. Bennett, *Kant's Analytic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 146: "Having a concept involves both being able to use it in 'rules' and under favorable sensory circumstances, to apply it to instances."

3. H. A. Prichard, *Kant's Theory of Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), 246: "It seems clear that if the first part [the Deduction] is successful, the second [the Schematism] must be unnecessary." Robert P. Wolff, *Kant's Theory of Mental Activity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), 207: "The artificiality of both the problem and the solution is evident upon reflection. . . . Either appearances can be subsumed under the categories without the aid of schemata, or else they cannot be subsumed at all." T. E. Wilkerson, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 94: "The Schematism serves no useful purpose and can in my opinion be ignored without loss."

of concepts and schemata in question. As Kant's own commitment to experimental science demands, there is a legitimate distinction to be drawn between possession and applicability of empirical concepts. By contrast, a successful transcendental deduction of the categories, i.e., the demonstration of their validity, effectively establishes the very equivalence of categorial possession and their proper applicability.

However, the equivalence of categorial possession and applicability does suggest that after the transcendental deduction the doctrine of schematism is superfluous. Indeed, though inconclusive, there is evidence that Kant shared this view at times. More importantly, this challenge to the necessity of the categories' schematization raises in turn questions about the legitimacy of the categories' deduction and, indeed, about similar philosophical arguments which purport to demonstrate *that* something is the case without demonstrating or, perhaps, without even being able to demonstrate *how* it is. Against the backdrop of these issues, I discuss the prospects of rescuing Kant from this second and potentially fatal line of criticism by attending to the different philosophical and rhetorical levels on which he writes. In conclusion I note how the problems for transcendental knowledge generally, raised by Kant's doctrine of schematism, constitute a central but onerous part of his philosophical legacy.

## 1

Criticism of the chapter on schematism in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is often aimed at a so-called general theory of schematism, understood as encompassing all types of concepts.<sup>4</sup> However, it is far from clear that Kant held a general theory in the sense that for each concept there is some corresponding schema. Indeed, though Kant is mute on this detail, it seems legitimate to assume that schemata for empirical concepts, unlike transcendental schemata, are contingent.

Inasmuch as a schema involves one kind of application of a concept, this last remark suggests a nonequivalence between the possession and applicability of empirical concepts. Since a denial of some senses of such nonequivalence is a key element in much criticism of Kant's theory, the remark demands both clarification and justification. On one reading, applicability of a concept can signify an ability to use some expression properly, either in silent soliloquy or with others. This meaning of applicability can be construed as a criterion for external (i.e., nonintrospec-

4. Bennett, *Kant's Analytic*, 143ff.; T. E. Wilkerson, *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, 95.

tive) evidence that one in fact possesses a concept.<sup>5</sup> Though Kant is not particularly interested in such criteria, his theory of concepts and their (possible) schematization is not incompatible with the notion of a criterion provided by this sense of applicability.

However, understanding applicability in this sense, I can certainly be said to possess a concept without being able to recognize an instance of it. Not only children learning a language but students of scientific theory who comprehend the concepts involved in that theory without being able to perform the experiments that yielded those concepts are able to apply concepts in this fashion. Indeed, the working scientist himself fashions hypotheses that may never be corroborated. Such a scientist applies a concept without being able necessarily to recognize an instance of the concept.<sup>6</sup> If these ruminations are right, then it is important to distinguish what we might call "discursive" from "cognitive" applicability of a concept.

Kant's theory of schematism is, of course, not concerned with the criteria for evidence of possessing a concept but with the use of a concept in cognition. A schema for an empirical concept is a procedure or method by means of which images are produced in accordance with that concept.<sup>7</sup> Apparently (though the theory neither is nor is intended to be wholly clear on this point), these images are quasi-instances of the concept involved, which both render the concept meaningful and aid in the recognition of real instances or objects—if there be any—falling under the concept. If it is a matter of cognitive applicability, that is to say, a matter of being able to recognize an object as an instance of a concept, possessing an empirical concept is by no means equivalent to being able to apply it.<sup>8</sup> In short, possession and discursive applicability of an empirical concept are equivalent, possession and cognitive applicability are not. The lack of an equivalence between possession and cognitive applicability of an empirical concept is one of the features that distinguish empirical concepts from the categories. And this nonequivalence entails a different relation between the concepts and schemata. Empirical concepts may have accompanying schemata, but these procedures, like the images they yield, are neither universal nor necessary. How you form an

5. Warnock, "Concept and Schematism," 80: "If I have a gauge, I can sensibly ask how to use it, how to apply it; but to ask how I apply a concept that I have, is to ask how I use a word that I know how to use."

6. See Chipman's example of "bone marrow" in his "Kant's Categories and Their Schematism," *Kant-Studien* 63 (1972): 36–50.

7. KrVA141/B180.

8. See my "Thinking, Knowing, and Schematism," *Akten des 5. Internationalen Kant-Kongress* (Mainz, 1981), ed. Gerhard Funke (Bonn: Grundmann, 1981), 209–20.

image of a concept of economy or a concept of polluted air, if you can be said to have such a procedure at all, need not be the same as my technique for imagining instances of these concepts. If an empirical concept has a schema, its relation to that concept, and the very procedure of schematizing are all empirical and contingent.<sup>9</sup>

While possession and cognitive applicability are not equivalent for empirical concepts, their equivalence is necessary for categories of the understanding. By demonstrating that categories are a priori conditions of any possible experience, Kant is arguing—even before the account of schematism—for the very thesis that some of his critics accuse him of rejecting! To be sure, something equivalent to a category must be discursively applicable and in that sense recognizable as a logical form apart from application to any possible experience.<sup>10</sup> The purpose of the transcendental deduction, however, is precisely to show that categories are “conditions of the possibility of experience and are valid therefore a priori also of all objects of experience.”<sup>11</sup> There is no experience that is not already subject to categories and there is no category which is not, as such, applicable to experience.

If the preceding interpretation is correct, then the difference between Kant's account of the categories' deduction and schematization does not turn on a bifurcation of possession and applicability (or, more precisely, proper applicability or, in Kant's terms, validity). Prior to the chapter on schematism, Kant is demonstrating the a priori applicability of categories in general—*überhaupt*—to experience. By contrast, the schematism chapter is concerned, not with the procedure in general, but with finding the *specific* temporal form necessary for *each* category.<sup>12</sup> The particular

9. Heidegger is one of the few commentators to have grasped the full weight of this distinction between categories and empirical concepts in terms of their relations to their respective schemata. See his *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1973), 89–98. In English: *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. James S. Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), 97–106.

10. Since pure concepts have some sort of application within the strictly logical context of thinking (i.e., independent of any relation to a possible experience) and can be recognized as such, it is probably advisable to distinguish a purely logical level of categorial possession, applicability, and recognizability from a transcendental level. This distinction among levels of applicability for pure concepts or categories is analogous to the distinction between discursive and cognitive applicability for empirical concepts. At the logical level a pure concept is applicable to objects of thought, at the transcendental level to objects of possible experience. Transcendental applicability and recognizability are necessarily schematic, strictly logical applicability and recognizability presumably are not.

11. KrV B161: “Folglich steht alle Synthesis, wodurch selbst Wahrnehmung möglich wird, unter den Kategorien, und, da Erfahrung Erkenntnis durch verknüpfte Wahrnehmungen ist, so sind die Kategorien Bedingungen der Möglichkeit der Erfahrung, und gelten also a priori auch von allen Gegenständen der Erfahrung.” See also KrVA89–90/B122.

12. Dr. Beck has called my attention to this difference between the Deduction and the Schematism. The Transcendental Deduction is not about “*die Kategorien*” but about “*Kat-*

character of schemata for categories, moreover, makes even more explicit Kant's commitment to the equivalence of categories' possession and applicability. Since imaginings are contingent and particular, it is possible (perhaps even likely) that images fail to correspond to categories in the way some images correspond to some empirical concepts. However, a transcendental schema, a schema for a category, is not an image but a determination of time.<sup>13</sup> This determination, like the image yielded by schemata for empirical concepts, provides a sort of quasi-instance of the respective category, but an a priori, unique instance and the work of the productive imagination. Since time is an a priori form of sensibility and a pure intuition, i.e., a condition of all other intuitions, the categories schematized as time-determinations are necessary and universal conditions of experience.<sup>14</sup> In this sense, transcendental schemata (allegedly) demonstrate *how* categories are, in each case, applicable universally and necessarily.

The fact that Kant argues for the equivalence of possession and applicability of categories is often overlooked by his commentators, though much of the responsibility for the oversight lies with Kant himself. Kant all too casually introduces accounts of schemata for empirical concepts and for pure sensible concepts (e.g., the geometrical concept of a circle) into his account of schemata for categories. Apparently intended to illuminate the nature of a schematism in general, these insertions fail to make clear the precise sameness and difference among the various types of schemata.

A prime instance of this ambiguity, the effects of which have seriously prejudiced interpretations of the schematism, is Kant's remark that "this schematism for our understanding, in regard to appearances and their mere form, is a hidden art in the depths of the human soul."<sup>15</sup> Numerous commentators cite this remark as evidence of the failure or serious inadequacies of Kant's transcendental project.<sup>16</sup> But is Kant referring to schematism for categories when he makes this remark? Perhaps so; after

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*egorien überhaupt,*" while the Schematism, like the Metaphysical Deduction, is about specific concepts.

13. KrV A145/B184f.: "Die Schemata sind daher nichts als *Zeitbestimmungen* a priori nach Regeln, und diese gehen nach der Ordnung der Kategorien, auf die *Zeitreihe*, den *Zeitinhalt*, die *Zeitordnung*, endlich den *Zeitbegriff* in Ansehung aller möglichen Gegenstände."

14. KrV A146/B185.

15. KrV A141/B180f.: "Dieser Schematismus unseres Verstandes, in Ansehung der Erscheinungen und ihrer blossen Form, ist eine verborgene Kunst in den Tiefen der menschlichen Seele, deren wahre Handgriffe wir der Natur schwerlich jemals abraten, und sie unverdeckt vor Augen legen werden."

16. For example, Bennett, *Kant's Analytic*, 142; Gottfried Martin, *Kant's Metaphysics and Theory of Science*, trans. P. G. Lucas (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1955), 82.



all, he explicitly mentions the “mere form” of appearances, presumably time, a distinguishing feature of transcendental schemata. But the comment is immediately preceded by two lengthy sentences in which Kant talks exclusively of schemata for empirical concepts. It seems quite likely that “this” in the expression “this schematism” within that remark refers to the immediately foregoing account of empirical schemata. If so, talk of the “hidden art in the depths of the human soul” might very well be intended to apply solely to schemata for empirical concepts.

The contingency and particularity of schemata for empirical concepts further supports this last interpretation, as does Kant’s view of the teachability of the power of judgment in regard to formal and to transcendental logics. In the introduction to the *Analytic of Principles* (immediately preceding the chapter on schematism), Kant distinguishes the power of judgment in formal logic as “a particular talent” that cannot be taught from the power of judgment in a transcendental logic.<sup>17</sup> The power of judgment in a transcendental logic is supposed to be governed by specific and determinable rules, namely, the schemata and the eight principles of pure understanding, and thus is apparently not to be written off as some inscrutable art.

## 2

A critic may agree with the interpretation offered in the first part of this paper, namely, that the transcendental (cognitive) applicability of categories, far from being in question, is actually presupposed in the chapter on schematism, having been purportedly demonstrated by the transcendental deduction. This same critic may, however, cite that very demonstration as evidence of the schematism chapter’s superfluousness. On this view the doctrine of schematism with its appeal to the imagination may be construed as evidence of the truth of Hegel’s complaint, revived by Strawson, that the genuine accomplishments of Kant’s theoretical philosophy are sabotaged by his commitment to a particular psychological model of human knowing.<sup>18</sup> As a psychological theory, the

17. *KrV* A133/B172: “. . . so zeigt sich, dass zwar der Verstand einer Belehrung und Ausrüstung durch Regeln fähig, Urteilstkraft aber ein besonderes Talent sei, welches gar nicht belehrt, sondern nur geübt sein will.” *KrV* A133/B172n: “Der Mangel an Urteilstkraft ist eigentlich das, was man Dummheit nennt.” *KrV* A135/B174: “Ob nun aber gleich die *allgemeine Logik* der Urteilstkraft keine Vorschriften geben kann, so ist es doch mit der *transzendentalen* ganz anders bewandt, sogar dass es scheint, die letztere habe es zu ihrem eigentlichen Geschäfte, die Urteilstkraft im Gebrauch des reinen Verstandes, durch bestimmte Regeln zu berichtigen und zu sichern.”

18. From Hegel’s “Lectures on the History of Philosophy,” see *Werke*, XX, 337: “Von der barbarischen Terminologie nicht zu sprechen, bleibt Kant innerhalb der psycholo-

account of schematism would certainly seem to be out of place in any attempt to demonstrate a priori principles of human cognition.

This objection raises the question of the nature of the distinction between “knowing that” and “knowing how”—a distinction underlying Kant’s division of the Transcendental Analytic into an Analytic of Concepts and an Analytic of Principles. The result of the deduction of the categories (the end of the Analytic of Concepts) is

- (1) . . . *that* the categories contain, on the side of the understanding, the grounds of the possibility of all experience in general. *How* they make experience possible, however, and what fundamental principles of its possibility they supply in their application to appearances will be shown in the following chapter on the transcendental use of the power of judgment. (B167)

In the introduction to the Transcendental Logic, Kant also speaks of transcendental knowledge as that “through which we know that and how specific representations are applied exclusively a priori” (A56/B80). What is the relation between this “knowing that” and “knowing how”? The schematism provides part of the answer to the question of how the categories are a priori applicable to experience. But is this answer superfluous to the argument that the categories are so applicable?

Surprisingly, perhaps, Kant himself *seems* to answer this question in the affirmative. I say “surprisingly,” since I argued in the first part of this paper that schematizing categories, unlike schematizing empirical concepts, is supposed to be necessary, universal, and specifiable (not inscrutable). In a footnote to the preface to the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, Kant responds to objections that a “clear and adequate” deduction of the system in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is indispensable but lacking. Kant claims not that the deduction demanded is present but that the deduction contained in the *Critique* is sufficient.

- (2) For if it can be proved *that* the categories which reason must make use of in all its knowledge have no other use than merely in relation to objects of experience . . . , then the answer *how* they make such possible is, to be sure, important enough in order to *complete* this deduction where possible, but in

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gischen Ansicht und empirischen Manier eingeschlossen.” Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, vol. 1, appendix: “Kritik der Kantischen Philosophie” (Wiesbaden: Eberhard Brockhaus, 1949), 534: “Kant . . . am Leitfaden der Analogie, für jede Bestimmung unserer empirischen Erkenntnis eine Analogie a priori darzuthun, sich bestrebt, und Dies zuletzt, in den Schematen, sogar auf eine bloße psychologische Tatsache ausdehnt, wobei der anscheinende Tiefsinn und die Schwierigkeit der Darstellung gerade dienen, dem Leser zu verbergen, dass der Inhalt derselben eine ganz unerweisliche und bloss willkürliche Annahme bleibt.” P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense* (London: Methuen, 1966), 15f., 29ff., 266.

relation to the chief purpose of the system, viz., the determination of the boundary of pure reason, it is in no way necessary, but simply helpful.<sup>19</sup>

If Kant is referring in this remark to the distinction between “knowing that” and “knowing how” in (1), he seems to be acknowledging in some sense the superfluousness of the schemata. An answer to the question of how the categories are applicable a priori to experience is perhaps helpful but not necessary to the argument that the categories are so applicable. Yet this interpretation of (2) at the same time seems inconsistent with the character of transcendental schemata (namely, that they are necessary, universal, and specifiable). Is Kant in (2) in fact referring to the distinction between “knowing that” and “knowing how” in (1)? Commentators disagree.

Robert Pippin claims that (2) concerns a “psychological how-question” to be distinguished from the “transcendental how-question.”<sup>20</sup> The latter question apparently *must* be answered and, hence, on this interpretation the doctrine of schematism would be necessary. Wolfgang Detel, on the other hand, argues that Kant in (2) is explicitly referring to the difference between categories’ deduction and schematization.<sup>21</sup> The doctrine of schematism supposedly works out the positive content of the categories, but is not at all necessary for the deduction of the categories. In other words, taking (2) as a reference to the distinction between “knowing that” and “knowing how” in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, one can conclude that Kant thought it possible to know that categories are a priori applicable to experience without knowing how.

There is, apparently, no clearly indisputable interpretation of (2) nor, for that matter, of how Kant viewed the role of the doctrine of the schematism. In support of Detel, it does seem a more straightforward reading of (2) to construe it as referring to the difference between the categories’ deduction and schematization. Yet if this is the correct reading of (2), it seems not only to corroborate the charges of psychologism and/or irrelevancy as far as the schematism is concerned, but also to contradict the necessity Kant apparently attaches to schematisms for categories. Detel’s talk of the schematism as a “working out . . . of the completion” of the categories’ deduction simply sidesteps the issue.<sup>22</sup>

Both commentators, however, overlook the crucial words “in relation to the chief purpose of the system” in (2). Kant is claiming that the an-

19. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, IV, 474.

20. Robert Pippin, “The Schematism and Empirical Concepts,” *Kant-Studien* 67 (1976): 160.

21. Wolfgang Detel, “Zur Funktion des Schematismus Kapitels in Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft,” *Kant-Studien* 69 (1978): 40f., 44.

22. *Ibid.*, 29–37.

swer to the "how" question is not necessary in one respect, namely, determining pure reason's boundary. But this assertion leaves open the question of the necessity of determining the conditions of the applicability of categories within experience.<sup>23</sup>

Determining what Kant has in mind in (2) is, in any event, far less significant than determining the relation between "knowing that" and "knowing how," both within the framework of Kant's transcendental philosophy and for a theory of knowledge. However, before that issue is addressed, the meanings of "knowing that" and "knowing how" in the present context must be clarified. Knowing that categories are a priori applicable to experience is not knowledge by acquaintance or direct evidence but rather the conclusion to an argument. Knowledge that experience or, better, experiential knowledge is possible only by virtue of the categories may be called categorial knowledge. Kant is claiming to know by demonstration (the transcendental deduction) that he knows the objects of experience—and is only able to know them—*categorially*. This knowledge by demonstration is formally presented as independent of the knowledge of *how* categorial knowledge is possible (the schematism and the system of all principles of pure understanding). From the standpoint of Kant's philosophy, knowing how categorial knowledge is possible can be described in terms of the subject or the object and empirically or transcendently.<sup>24</sup>

Returning now to the relation between these two types of knowledge, it is clear that a distinction between knowing that I know and—at least at some levels—knowing how I know is a commonplace in human experience. I can recognize (i.e., know that I know) that something is a dog by

23. Dr. Beck was instrumental in clarifying this issue for me.

24. Here a comment is in order on the relation of the doctrine of the schematism to what Kant called the "two sides" of the deduction of the categories. The objective side "refers to the objects of pure understanding and is supposed to demonstrate and make intelligible [*darstellen und begreiflich machen*] the objective validity of its concepts a priori." The subjective side considers "the pure understanding itself, in terms of its possibility and the cognitive powers on which it rests, i.e., considers it in a subjective connection." This subjective side is thus an attempt to explain how the human mind is in the position of making use of its concepts a priori. In a use of terms closely resembling (2) above and thus adding support to the interpretation that relates (2) to the Transcendental Analytic, Kant describes the objective side as "essential" and the subjective side as "important" but "not essential" (*KrV* Axvi–xvii). Given that the objective deduction establishes *that* experience is only possible through categories, the question remains of *how* the human power of knowing is constituted to be able to achieve this a priori knowledge. This I take to be the question of the subjective deduction. Yet one might also ask *how* the categories make experience possible (and thus how the categories have objective validity). The question points to an objective condition a priori beyond the pure concepts of the understanding. The answer to this second and necessary "how" question is given by the doctrine of schematism. Thus I would distinguish two "how questions": (1) subjective and psychological and (2) objective and transcendental.

means of a concept (or at least know how to employ “dog” to identify a dog) without knowing how such knowledge by means of concepts is possible. So, too, to cite the proverbial example, I know that I can raise my hand (i.e., I know that I know how to raise my hand) without knowing how I know this.<sup>25</sup> “Knowing that” and “knowing how” are thus empirically distinguishable in the sense that I experience one sort of knowing without the other. Does the relation between “knowing that” and “knowing how” in the *Critique of Pure Reason* merely reflect this empirical distinction?

At certain levels of analysis (e.g., the *ordo exhibitendi et discendi*; see below), this interpretation of the relation between “knowing that” and “knowing how” may be perfectly acceptable, but it runs the risk—from Kant’s point of view—of placing his transcendental claims on an empirical footing. Even should there be an acceptable sense of “knowing” such that I can be said to know that *x* is a dog (that the concept of dog is applicable here) without being able to explain how I know, recourse to empirical knowledge or knowledge via empirical concepts does not justify a similar distinction at the level of so-called transcendental knowledge.<sup>26</sup> Kant is not interested so much in knowledge of objects as in knowledge of the type of knowing, insofar as this is allegedly possible a priori. “I name all knowledge ‘transcendental’ which concerns itself in general not so much with objects but with our type of knowledge of objects in-

25. This sentence provides a welcome opportunity to indicate potential similarities and differences between the sense of “knowing how” at issue in the discussion of Kant’s doctrine of schematisms and the sense of “know how” discussed by Gilbert Ryle. Rylean “know how” refers to capacities to perform practical activities, capacities that need not be the counterpart to a propositional attitude of “knowing that.” Ryle employs the distinction, among other things, to dispel the regress-engendering “intellectualist legend” that such know-how presupposes knowing that such-and-such is the case or that certain rules govern the activity at hand. Ryle counters this suggestion with the observation: “Some intelligent performances are not controlled by any anterior acknowledgments of the principles applied to them” (from Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* [New York: Barnes & Noble, 1966], 30). The valuable observations that Ryle makes about the empirical differences between thinking how to act (“knowing that”) and acting intelligently (“knowing how”) are not directly relevant to Kant’s project of establishing the a priori validity of categories transcendently. The doctrine of schematism is supposed to answer *how* it is that the transcendental subject—or human consciousness, transcendently considered—knows what it has been already demonstrated *that* it knows.

26. My gloss of these matters in terms of the first person, e.g., the question of whether I can know with or without knowing how I know, can be misleading. To avoid any misunderstanding, it should be stressed here that the knowledge of how the categories apply—let us call it “schematic knowledge”—need not be, any more than knowledge that the categories apply (categorical knowledge), the sort of knowledge of which the ordinary, empirical knower is aware or conscious. Still, there is necessarily a transcendental knower, to whom the knowing in each sense, categorical and schematic, is to be attributed. The transcendental knower presumably coincides with that conscious attribution in the transcendental philosopher.

sofar as this is supposed to be possible a priori" (B25). In some contexts, of course, it might be perfectly appropriate to say that we know that someone knows something and to say this confidently even without our knowing exactly how the person knows as much. Our knowledge of this particular state of affairs—which happens to include a distinction between kinds of a posteriori knowledge, e.g., evidence that she knows something and evidence of how she knows it—is itself a posteriori. However, this knowledge as such does not without further ado warrant the supposition of such a distinction or, more precisely, a nonequivalence between the corresponding kinds of a priori knowledge. In other words, supposing that a priori knowledge is possible, can I know that I know something a priori without knowing a priori how I know? Or, to remain closer to Kant's idiom, he argues that experience (empirical knowledge) of objects is only possible because categories are necessarily and universally applicable to, i.e., a priori valid of, any possible experience; but it is difficult to see how this argument can be trenchant without a demonstration of how the categories are so applicable. Indeed, even for empirical knowledge in some contexts, let alone supposed conditions for any possible experience, the operative distinction here is arguably tenuous. Would I normally say "I know that Fifi is a dog" if I were not prepared to add something that corroborated that I know how I know this, for example, something like "because I saw her, because Fifi has the marks of a canine," and so on?<sup>27</sup>

What I am suggesting, then, is that for Kant to be able to sustain his argument, the relation or, better, knowledge of the relation between "knowing that" and "knowing how" in the transition from the Analytic of Concepts to the Analytic of Principles (i.e., between categories' deduction and schematization) has to be transcendental. By "transcendental" I mean that each term of the relation, i.e., each type of knowledge, is a ground of the possibility of the other, and that there needs to be some principle making knowledge of the relation possible a priori. There is some evidence that Kant conceived the relation in this fashion. In the first part of this chapter I cited those indications Kant gives that the schemata for categories are necessary, universal, and specifiable. Already in the B deduction there is talk of "the transcendental synthesis of the imagination" and determinations of "the inner sense in terms of its form" (B151; see, too, B155), features that figure prominently in Kant's account of transcendental schemata. In the same context Kant identifies the understanding and the imagination. "It is one and the same sponta-

27. Or (if we may invoke knowledge *de re* and not merely knowledge *de dicto* in the present context) am I really entitled to answer that I know Fifi without being able to state to some degree—however slight—how I know her?

neity, which there under the name of the imagination, here of the understanding, brings some combination [*Verbindung*] into the manifold of the intuition" (B162). Finally, both in the transcendental deduction and in the doctrine of schematism Kant refers to "the unity of apperception" as the ultimate principle of synthetic unity, a unity required for knowing that and how categories are a priori applicable to experience.

## 3

Although there are indications that the relation between the categories' deduction and schematization is in some sense "transcendental," the case for this interpretation is far from conclusive. Above all, what needs explaining to establish this interpretation are: (a) certain troublesome passages, especially the lines—(2) above—from the footnote to the preface of the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*; (b) the precise sense in which the categories' schematization is necessary to their deduction; and (c) the status of the chapter on schematism *after* the transcendental deduction of the categories (indeed, a chapter that Kant retained unaltered in the second edition, despite the revised version of the deduction). Each of these items can be construed as evidence of the schematism's superfluosness or of the psychologism underlying (and sabotaging) Kant's transcendental philosophy. Either knowing how the categories are universally and necessarily applicable to experience is irrelevant to knowing that they are or, if such "knowing how" is relevant, transcendental knowledge is dependent upon some claims about psychological facts (indeed, some rather dubious claims at that). Such is the unkind option Kant's critics find in his account of transcendental schemata.

In the face of this criticism, there remain at least two possible lines of defense of Kant's theory of schematism, though either defense, in order merely to get off the ground, requires differentiating the levels of Kant's account and, by extension, the levels of interpretation. On one level of interpretation, a sharp distinction between "knowing that" and "knowing how" may be granted (such that the former does not suppose or entail the latter), while at another level denied.

A defender of Kant's theory might agree that the specific concerns of the chapter on schematism are indeed superfluous, but argue that some sort of schematism is nonetheless necessary. This reading of Kant's theory of schematism would explain not only the controversial passage from the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, but also Kant's talk of the "boring analysis" of what is required for a transcendental schema and his



description of the latter as “the phenomenon or the sensible concept of an object, in agreement with the category” (A142/B181; A146/B186). In other words, a schematization of categories is in general necessary and so much is demonstrated by the transcendental deduction, but the particular schematization of a category may be specifiable in a variety of ways, no one of which is known to be necessary for that demonstration. (To be sure, as a transcendental determination of time, a schema for a category is necessary *for* experience to be possible, but this necessity—at least at this juncture in the argument—does not preclude the possibility of another sort of schema for the same category.) Moreover, specifying how the categories are a priori applicable to experience amounts to providing a categorial determination of time as a transcendental condition and hence is neither psychological nor empirical. Yet further specification of time in terms of the categories is not necessary to establish that some such specification takes place.

According to this interpretation, a distinction between knowing that and knowing how categories are a priori applicable is legitimate in the sense that principles of the categories' applicability are in fact operative though the specific character of those principles (how they specifically apply to and determine the objects of experience) remains unknown. In other words, the categories are schematized in specific ways, that is to say, they are temporally specific conditions of any possible experience, regardless of whether those specific ways are able to be indicated (known) with any necessity.

While there is a great deal of plausibility to this interpretation, it not only runs counter to Kant's own apparent claims for the transcendental schematisms, but also rests on the highly problematic assumption that the necessity of certain *general* features (or conditions) of experience can be demonstrated without being able to demonstrate the *specific* ways these general features (or conditions) are necessary (or that a specific way outlined is the only and necessary specification). The legitimacy of this assumption seems to depend on the legitimacy of distinguishing something like an *ordo essendi* from an *ordo cognoscendi*. The articulation and defense of such a distinction within the framework of what Kant means by “transcendental” is obviously a highly complicated affair. While it may appear plausible enough to distinguish knowing on an empirical plane from an essential order of things, it is not so easy to distinguish transcendental knowledge from that order. The *ordo essendi* of Kant's subject matter, if I may be permitted the odd expression, is transcendently constituted and, in that sense, inseparable from the *ordo cognoscendi*. In other words, conditions of the possibility of real experi-



ence are also cognitive principles, i.e., principles of knowing that experience.<sup>28</sup> What sort of cogency is there to an argument that a certain principle is a condition of the possibility of real experience if the way in which that principle conditions experiences cannot be specified with necessity? Is it legitimate to claim that one knows something, particularly something universal and necessary, if one cannot account for how this universal and necessary feature applies to its supposed field of application? Moreover, as noted in the first part of this paper, Kant appears (in the *Critique of Pure Reason* anyway) to consider it a task of transcendental philosophy to demonstrate in clearly specifiable ways how the categories are universal and necessary conditions of any possible experience. There is no place for stupidity (*Dummheit*) in the application of transcendental logic.<sup>29</sup>

There is another possible line of defense. Kant may be understood as invoking the separability of “knowing that” and “knowing how” for the reader in the *ordo exhibitendi et discendi*, while denying that separability absolutely. To justify this interpretation, the passage from the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* would have to be understood, as Pipin conceives it, as referring solely to a “psychological how-question.” In Kant’s mind, knowledge of categories’ schematization is a necessary condition for their deduction, but it appears after the deduction because Kant considered this order the most suitable for *presenting* (*exhibitendi*) his argument and *educating* (*discendi*) his readers. The advantage of this interpretation is that it preserves the transcendently necessary character Kant appears to assign to specific schematizations of the categories.<sup>30</sup>

Yet the difficulties with this second line of defense are also formidable. How does one establish the difference between the *ordo exhibitendi et discendi* and the *ordo cognoscendi*, especially when an interpretation of a given text or sentence is to be assigned to one level rather than another? Can the footnote to the preface of the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* be so glibly dismissed as unrelated to the distinction between

28. Kant’s transcendental idealism, in other words, is an argument for the equivalence, at a certain level, of the *ordo essendi* with the *ordo cognoscendi*.

29. See note 17 above. Also, KrV A135/B174f.: “Es hat aber die Transzendental-Philosophie das Eigentümliche: dass sie ausser der Regel (oder vielmehr der allgemeinen Bedingung zu Regeln) die in dem reinen Begriffe des Verstandes gegeben wird, zugleich a priori den Fall anzeigen kann, worauf sie angewandt werden sollen.” KrVA136/B175: “. . . sie [die Transzendental-Philosophie] muss zugleich die Bedingungen, unter welchen Gegenstände in Uebereinstimmung mit jenen Begriffen gegeben werden können, in allgemeinen aber hinreichenden Kennzeichen darlegen, . . .”

30. Indeed, given Kant’s account of the regulative employment of the ideas at the end of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, it is to be expected that there is a necessary and reciprocal sort of unity to the sorts of knowing that form the backbone of the Transcendental Analytic.

"knowing that" and "knowing how" in the *Critique of Pure Reason*? Above all, even assuming these queries can be satisfactorily answered, do we have reason enough to suppose that the transcendental schemata, i.e., the time-determinations of the categories, are the necessary specifications of how categories are a priori applicable? Are other specifications possible and, if so, why are they to be dismissed in favor of the schematizing Kant indicates? (Walsh, for example, has suggested reversing the temporal order in the schematization of causality, thereby rendering the category of causality teleological.)<sup>31</sup> Perhaps most significant in regard to this challenge is the lack of any extended discussion or argument on Kant's part attempting to establish that his schematisms are the only possible ones or are the necessary principles of how categories are a priori applicable.

## Conclusion

Though neither defense of Kant's theory of schematism as presented in the preceding pages is fully compelling and unobjectionable on textual and systematic grounds, together they suggest the need to approach the *Critique of Pure Reason* (like any philosophical text) with a certain hermeneutic vigilance, a sensitivity to the different possible philosophical and rhetorical levels of meaning attaching to passages within a work and an oeuvre as a whole. As far as the theme of the present paper is concerned, a great deal more needs to be said about the nature of the distinction that Kant is making between knowing that and knowing how categorial knowledge is possible as well as about his different possible motivations and grounds for asserting the distinction. The basic problem for the interpreter is the fact that Kant in some passages underscores the dispensability, in other passages the indispensability of knowing how the categories specifically apply a priori (the doctrine of schematism) to knowing that they generally do (categorial knowledge). We have suggested two strategies for dealing with this conundrum: the first urges the dispensability of the specificity of the stated doctrine of the schematism (on the supposition that one need not know specifically how the categories are applicable in order to know that and how they are generally); the second strategy proposes the indispensability of the doctrine and explains Kant's apparent statements to the contrary as a pedagogical, rhetorical, or even stylistic matter (what we called the specific *ordo exhibitendi et discendi* of the text). Whether one of these interpre-

31. W. H. Walsh, "Schematism," in *Kant: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Robert P. Wolff (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), 86f.

tations or yet another is the right one remains to be seen but the stakes are high since the structure of Kant's argument in the *Transcendental Analytic*—a structure fashioned on the distinction between “knowing that” and “knowing how”—rides on our understanding of the doctrine of schematism. The possibility of refuting or defending Kant's transcendental project presupposes this understanding.

The challenge that these difficult issues present to transcendental knowledge in general is itself a central part of Kant's philosophical legacy and, as such, has a bearing on any pretension to transcendental philosophy. A transcendental philosophy aims at demonstrating that there exist certain conditions for the possibility of any experience, that these conditions are categories possessed by human understanding, and that thus there is universal and necessary knowledge of experience. But Kant also instructs us—sometimes at least—that transcendental philosophy is only possible if it can also demonstrate *how* the categories condition experience and how this knowledge is possible. In other words, without a trenchant doctrine of something akin to a transcendental schematism, a transcendental philosophy's demonstration of the validity of its categories—its deduction and with it, that philosophy itself—remain an unfulfilled promissory note.

## Chapter 3

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### THE NATURAL RIGHT OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN KANT'S CIVIL UNION

Despite significant changes promulgated in the Tax Reform Act of 1976, death has implied taxation in the United States, at least by the federal government, since 1916. More specifically, transfers of wealth, including inheritance and estates, have been taxed both to reduce inequality and to capture revenue for the state. In recent years, however, economists have expressed doubts about the sagacity of taxing what you cannot take with you. Because the taxation of wealth transfers diminishes the incentive to accumulate capital to pass on to heirs, it is argued, such taxation lowers a nation's productive capacity.<sup>1</sup>

These arguments are indeed weighty, resting as they do on empirical studies and utilitarian concerns within the purview of the economists' craft. However, the egalitarian ideal is challenged on other grounds as well. "Perhaps," one economist suggests, "the most damaging argument against perfect equality as an ideal, even if we are willing to ignore disincentive effects for purposes of discussion, is that it is an ideal under which few people would want to live."<sup>2</sup> Not only a detriment to productivity, the ideal of equality is considered inconsistent with the high-

1. Richard E. Wagner, *Inheritance and the State: Tax Principles for a Free and Prosperous Commonwealth* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1977); Carl H. Madden, "Is Our Tax System Making Us Second-Rate?" *National Tax Journal* 26 (September 1973): 403–7; Walter J. Blum and Harry Kelven Jr., *The Uneasy Case for Progressive Taxation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 90–100. The revenue garnered from such taxation is minimal (less than 2 percent in 1976), yet the principles involved may be used to defend indirect guarantees of inheritance such as tax-sheltered trusts and other fiduciary arrangements, thus having far-reaching effects on distribution of wealth and governmental policy.

2. Wagner, *Inheritance and the State*, 30. But see also David Gauthier, "Economic Rationality and Moral Constraints," in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 3, ed. Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling, and Howard K. Wettstein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 87.

er ideal of human freedom. Thus, for writers such as Robert Nozick, equal distribution of holdings in a society expresses an ideal that ought not override an actual, historical distribution, provided the distribution arose legitimately. Indeed, according to Nozick's entitlement theory of justice, since "particular rights over things fill the space of rights," material equality and even equality of opportunity should not be considered rights at all.<sup>3</sup>

John Rawls, on the other hand, argues for "the liberal principle of the fair equality of opportunity," a distribution of advantages according to pure procedural justice and consistent with his "difference principle." Differences or inequalities may be countenanced only if they maximize the welfare of the worst-off representative member of the society and attach to positions to which each member has an equal opportunity. "Thus inheritance is permissible provided that the resulting inequalities are to the advantage of the least fortunate and compatible with liberty and fair equality of opportunity." To insure that this condition is met, a "distribution branch" of the government imposes inheritance taxes and sets restrictions on the rights of bequest "not to raise revenue (release resources to government) but gradually and continually to correct the distribution of wealth and to prevent concentrations of power detrimental to the fair value of political liberty and fair equality of opportunity."<sup>4</sup>

Is personal liberty more of a right than equality?<sup>5</sup> It is not clear that

3. Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974), 232–38, 150f. John Finnis, *Natural Law and Natural Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 173f.

4. See Bernard Williams, "The Idea of Equality," in *Moral Concepts*, ed. Joel Feinberg (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969); John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). For Rawls's account of the "fair equality of opportunity," see *ibid.*, 83f. Calling the latter a "liberal" principle is something of a misnomer since it modifies the liberal interpretation of equal opportunity with the difference principle, thus yielding what Rawls labels "democratic equality." While sharing liberal misgivings with the influence of social contingencies or natural chance on distribution, "democratic equality" insures fair (and not merely formal or legal) equality of opportunity, a social minimum, and only those inequalities that benefit the worst-off representative members of society. See *ibid.*, 73–83. Among the background institutions called for by these principles of distributive justice, Rawls assumes a basic structure regulated by a just constitution and securing the liberties of equal citizenship (e.g., freedom of conscience, equal participation in fair political procedures), fair equality of opportunity, and a social minimum. The "distribution branch" is one of four branches which are to establish these institutions. *Ibid.*, 277–78. Inheritance taxes, as here justified, need not conflict with Rawls's lexical ordering of the two principles of justice. Thus, he notes (*ibid.*, 204): "When lexical order holds, a basic liberty covered by the first principle can be limited only for the sake of liberty itself, that is, only to insure that the same liberty or a different basic liberty is properly protected and to adjust the one system of liberties in the best way."

5. The question is simple-minded and rhetorical, of course, but that is its virtue: its demand for clarification. Personal liberty may be construed here as individuals' "freedom to order their actions as they think fit," as long as they do not transgress the similar freedom of others. Locke adds that civil government is to insure this liberty, a view which, along with the general description of liberty, would be acceptable to Nozick (*Anar-*

there is any theoretical middle ground between these competing libertarian and liberal views of equality, let alone their specific applications to issues of bequest and inheritance. Nevertheless, both Nozick and Rawls explicitly claim to be consistently developing insights central to Kant's moral thinking. Nozick argues that a minimal state is the only morally permissible state, because it alone insures the inviolability of individual persons, thus fulfilling the Kantian imperative to treat humanity as an end and never solely as a means.<sup>6</sup> For his part, Rawls insists that his theory of justice provides "a procedural interpretation of Kant's conception of autonomy and the categorical imperative."<sup>7</sup>

Yet curiously neither author seems to have taken the trouble to come to some clear understanding of where Kant himself stood on these issues of distributive justice.<sup>8</sup> The following paper is an attempt to explicate Kant's handling of one such issue, namely, that of the conflicting claims of inheritance and equal opportunity. In addition to attempting to contribute to understanding of Kant's moral teachings (including its ambiguities), the explication suggests Kant's own alternative to the impasse of libertarian and liberal conceptions of distributive justice. The alternative is not the subordination of liberty to equality or vice versa, but their joint subordination to a principle of civil independence.

Kant faced the issue of a possible conflict between claims of bequest and those of equal opportunity in the context of his account of natural rights underlying the imperative to enter into a civilly constituted state.

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chy, *State, and Utopia*, 10), Rawls (*A Theory of Justice*, 202), and Kant. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 2nd ed., ed. Peter Laslett (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1967), secs. 4–13. "Equality" here does not mean material equality as in some "end-result principles" or "allocative conception of justice," utilitarian conceptions rejected by Nozick and Rawls alike for Kantian reasons (*Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, 155, 232–35; *A Theory of Justice*, 88f.). Nor does "equality" in my simple-minded question refer to juridical equality, the "equal liberty" or "the liberties of equal citizenship" Rawls claims reconcile liberty and equality: see *ibid.*, 204f. Rather "equality" here signifies equal opportunity, a notion specified in the course of the paper.

6. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, 30–33.

7. *A Theory of Justice*, sec. 40, pp. 251–57: "The Kantian Interpretation of Justice as Fairness."

8. This claim is made with some trepidation in Rawls's case, since his conception of justice, by his own account, "generalizes and carries to a higher level of abstraction the familiar theory of the social contract as found, say, in Locke, Rousseau, and Kant" (*A Theory of Justice*, 11). With its "Kantian interpretation," moreover, *A Theory of Justice* evidences considerable reflection on and reference to Kant's moral and political thinking, including the ideas contained in the essay "Theory and Practice" on which my own comments rely so heavily (*A Theory of Justice*, 12, 31, 133). Nevertheless, despite the profound and often acknowledged similarities (some of which are noted in this paper) between Kant's "provisional" civil union or "*ursprünglicher Kontrakt*" and Rawls's "original position," I do not find in *A Theory of Justice* a clear indication of their differences. This lack is not, of course, a criticism of Rawls, whose aim was not exegesis of Kant's teachings. "I do not wish to argue here for this interpretation on the basis of Kant's text." *Ibid.*, 252.

Accordingly, this paper begins with a brief review of Kant's theory of rights and the obligation to form a civil union.

## A Civil Constitution as a Moral Imperative

The moral nature of a civil constitution, Kant maintains, distinguishes it from all other social contracts. While other unions may be based on contingent, even if commonly shared, aims, a civilly constituted union is a "purpose in itself (which each one ought to have), . . . the unconditioned and first duty."<sup>9</sup> The establishment of a civil union is a duty precisely because its purpose consists in guaranteeing "the *right* of human beings *under public laws of coercion*, through which what belongs to each member can be determined and secured against attack from anyone else." Kant thus grounds the duty of establishing and maintaining a civil constitution on its moral purpose: to fix and defend the rights and primarily the property rights of the parties to that constitution.<sup>10</sup>

Yet the term "right," as Kant employs it, is a juridical term and not an ethical term. It refers, not to a moral disposition or adoption of motive, but to persons' actions and affairs insofar as they have an influence upon one another. Those actions or states of affairs are rights which are compatible with the freedom of everyone, insofar as this is possible according to a universal law. A right thus involves a limitation of each individual's freedom to a condition under which it is in agreement with everyone else's freedom.<sup>11</sup>

This limitation is the authority to force or coerce another to respect one's life, actions, and possessions.<sup>12</sup> I may be said to have this authority

9. Kant, "Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis," in *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 289. For an English translation, see *Kant's Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 73. Hereafter references to the German original will be followed by "Reiss" and the page number of the corresponding English translation in parentheses where possible. All translations, however, are my own. Kant appears to treat constitution (*Verfassung*), its establishment (*Stiftung*), and the union (*Verbindung*) of many through such a constitution in a roughly equivalent manner in this passage.

10. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 289 (Reiss, 73). See, too, *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VI, 245f. and 270. A civil union is described as a "purpose in itself" and "unconditional and first duty," but then human rights under public, coercive laws are deemed "the purpose which in such an external relation is in itself duty and even the highest condition of every other duty."

11. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VI, 230f. and VIII, 289 (Reiss, 133 and 73). The relationship between morality, rights, and ethics in Kant is incomprehensible unless one does assume (with Rawls) something like the primary social goods as the sort of things every rational human being would want. Kant's doctrine of natural rights and the pure procedural justice they suppose give (political) content to the categorical imperative.

12. "Right," Kant informs us, "is bound up with the authority to coerce." *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VI, 231, 237 (Reiss, 133).

when my actions or states of affairs (my life, my possessions, my transfer of the latter) are compatible with everyone else's freedom to perform similar actions and maintain similar states of affairs. Accordingly, Kant refers to a civil union as "a relation of *free* human beings who stand under laws of coercion."<sup>13</sup>

Kant distinguishes natural (or private) from civil (or public) rights. This is not a distinction between the natural and the social, but rather between what rests a priori on principles alone and what proceeds from the will of a legislator as well. This distinction may seem incongruous since Kant characterizes right actions and states of affairs in terms of their compatibility with everyone else's freedom "according to a universal law." Yet there is no discrepancy since natural rights, though derived solely from a priori principles, are described "provisionally" and "in the expectation" of the civil union.<sup>14</sup>

Given this brief abstract of Kant's theory of rights, the moral imperative of a civil constitution might be restated as follows. Human beings ought freely and mutually to enter into the sort of union in which each individual's freedom is secured by general laws, inasmuch as this is possible, even if the securing is by force or coercion. Referring to the external relations of persons toward one another and thus to their possessions, this freedom under the condition of its general agreement with others' freedom is a right. In other words, human beings should become members of a union in which they promise to respect the property rights of every member of that union, under pain of coercion.

## Natural Rights and the Civil Condition

In remarks directed against Hobbes's *De Cive* (1642), Kant states that a civilly constituted union is present only in a society which finds itself in a "civil condition" (*bürgerlicher Zustand*).<sup>15</sup> What precisely is this civil condition? It is intriguing to speculate about what Kant may have intended to include under this "civil condition" presupposed by a civilly constituted union.<sup>16</sup> Yet, however it is to be specified, this civil condition

13. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 290 (Reiss, 73). Kant's underlining of the word "free" in this last remark is hardly cosmetic. Entry into the civil union with the acceptance of limitation of freedom under pain of coercion must be itself a free action. See *A Theory of Justice*, 125, 251f., for the view that principles of justice are chosen in the original position.

14. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VI, 237, 255–257, 264. The parallels between this "provisional" account and Rawls's "original position" have been explored by Karl Brehmer in Rawls's "Original Position" oder Kants "Ursprünglicher Kontrakt": *Die Bedingungen der Möglichkeit eines wohlgeordneten Zusammenlebens* (Koenigstein/Ts.: Forum Academicum, 1980).

15. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 289 (Reiss, 73); *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VI, 255–57, 264. Nisbet's translation of *Zustand* as "state" can only mislead.

16. Is this "civil condition" something like "civil society" (*die bürgerliche Gesellschaft*),



is perhaps best understood as a hypothetical state of affairs or social arrangement conforming to the moral law.<sup>17</sup> More precisely, this social arrangement amounts to a "juridical condition" founded upon the following *a priori* principles (or innate, natural rights):

1. the *freedom* of every member of society as *human beings*,
2. the *equality* of them with each other as *subjects*,
3. the *independence* of each member of a commonwealth, as *citizens*.<sup>18</sup>

By "freedom" in this context Kant means an individual's right to pursue happiness as he or she sees fit, without interference, as long as that pursuit is compatible with similar pursuits of others and thus with everyone's freedom according to universal laws. The natural right of "equality" is the common authority of those who stand under these laws to coerce others, who are also subjects, to abide by these laws (the sovereign excluded). Lastly, "independence" signifies the right to vote of citizens as co-legislators, a right presupposing possession of property.<sup>19</sup>

Side by side with "the thoroughgoing equality of human beings in a state as subjects," there may exist considerable inequality in natural abilities, both intellectual and physical, and in wealth. These inequalities obviously result in some individuals' subservience to others. Kant mentions specifically the poor and the rich, children and parents, wives and husbands, wage-earners and employers, renters and landlords, and farm-workers and landowners. After recognizing these existing disparities in natural ability and economic standing, Kant adds that "each member of the commonwealth must be permitted to achieve any rank of a class in the commonwealth . . . to which his talent, industry, and fortune can

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that system of needs Hegel makes the seat of rights and the condition for the state in his own *Rechtsphilosophie*? (See Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* in *Werke*, VII, 339–98.) Or does Kant have in mind the social conventions Hume calls "custom . . . the great guide for human life"? Perhaps, since Kant clearly has *De Cive* before him, he is referring to Hobbes's insistence that civil society be, not a mere *consensio* (or "*conspiratio plurium voluntatum ad eundem finem*"), but a *unio* ("*Voluntatum haec submissio omnium illorum, unus hominis voluntati, vel unius concilii tunc fit, quando unusquisque eorum unicuique caeterorum se pacto obligat ad non resistendum voluntati illius hominis vel illius concilii, cui se submisit, . . . vocaturque Unio.*") See Hobbes *Libri de cive* in *Opera philosophica*, vol. 2 (London: Bohn, 1839), 213f. Or perhaps "*bürgerlicher Zustand*" is simply Kant's rendering of Hobbes's "*status civilis*" loosely contrasted with "*status naturae*." See Hobbes, *Libri de cive*, 177f. See John Kekes, "Civility and Society," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 1, no. 4 (October 1984): 429–43, for a development of a conception of civility on the basis of Aristotle's "civic friendship" and Hume's "custom." Finally, Michael Oakshott, *On Human Conduct* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), "On the Civil Condition," 108–84.

17. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 297 (Reiss, 79). See Jeffrie G. Murphy, *Kant: The Philosophy of Right* (London: St. Martin's, 1970), 109–13. See *A Theory of Justice*, 12 and 120, on the hypothetical character of his "original position."

18. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 290 (Reiss, 74).

19. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 294f. (Reiss, 77f.).

bring him.”<sup>20</sup> Kant thus recognizes a kind of equal opportunity as an innate right of every subject in the state. However, this right, as he describes it at this juncture, can in no way be interpreted or serve as a basis for redistribution of wealth according to some utilitarian scheme or even in the qualified and nonutilitarian manner of Rawls's fair equality of opportunity. Far from supposing some ideal pattern of distribution,<sup>21</sup> the equal opportunity Kant has in mind yields various kinds of inequalities (for example, material inequalities) and emerges from the natural right of equal treatment before the law.<sup>22</sup>

Thus a libertarian perspective forms an important element of Kant's conception of equal opportunity in this context, as is further confirmed by his view of what constitutes unequal opportunity. Birth is no act of the newborn capable of serving as a basis for inequality. If some members of society were permitted by birth to coerce others into some class or standing without being able to be coerced in turn, the principle of equality among co-subjects (*Mituntertan*) would certainly be violated. Hence, there can be no individual or class privileged by birth and no inherited prerogatives among the subjects of the state.<sup>23</sup>

## The Equal Opportunity for Civil Independence

On a libertarian (or “natural liberty”) interpretation of equality, the latter may be construed as the natural right to equal treatment under the law, thereby securing the formal equality of opportunity to acquire whatever benefits one's “talent, industry, and fortune” can bring. By contrast, from a liberal point of view, fair equality of opportunity requires some restrictions (e.g., inheritance taxes) on those benefits, in order to guarantee similar chances and thus mitigate certain natural, but unequal contingencies (e.g., social, economic, and educational conditions). The liberal view, even in Rawls's qualified version with its justification of inequalities, aims at (among other things) a redistribution

20. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 292 (Reiss, 75).

21. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, 153–64, on patterning; also F. A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), 99.

22. Kant's thinking is thus echoed in Hayek's remark (*The Constitution of Liberty*, 99): “Justice does require that those conditions of people's lives that are determined by government be provided equally for all. But equality of those conditions must lead to inequality of results.”

23. “No one can bequeath to his progeny the privilege of the class [*Stand*] which he has within the commonwealth.” Everything else, Kant adds, may be handed down, as long as it is a thing (*Sache*) and can be acquired and disposed of as property. No person, of course, can be considered property or forfeit his or her equality through any “juridical act,” e.g., through contract or military occupation; see *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 293 (Reiss, 76).

of wealth.<sup>24</sup> While Kant does not adopt this liberal interpretation, he nonetheless construes the natural right of equality beyond libertarian constraints. Equality for Kant is a natural right, not only to the legal equality (equality before the law, the courts) that libertarian and liberal views aim to secure, but also to equality of opportunity for civil independence. By way of contrast with the libertarian and liberal interpretations of equal opportunity, the Kantian alternative upholds what is perhaps best described as *civil* equality of opportunity.

The principles of equality and liberty (the first and second principles of the civil constitution) are subordinate to the principle of independence (the third principle), in the sense that the consent (agreement or vote) of the members of the state as co-legislators is a condition for a free pursuit of happiness and for equal standing before the law within the commonwealth.<sup>25</sup> In this connection Kant distinguishes citizens from mere beneficiaries of the state, the latter being equal to the former in being subject to public laws, but not as legislators of those laws.<sup>26</sup> Kant identifies necessary conditions for being a citizen as follows.

The quality requisite for it is, outside the *natural* (that it be no child, no wife) only one: that he be his own master (*sui iuris*), and thereby have some kind of property (toward which also each art, craft, or fine art or science can be counted) which nourishes him. That is, in those cases where he must acquire from another in order to live, he acquires only through selling what is his, not through permission which he gives to others to make use of his powers. Thus, in the proper sense of the word he serves no one but the commonwealth.<sup>27</sup>

Thus house servants, clerks, hairdressers, and wage-earners in general do not qualify as citizens. The key difference lies in whether one's property (including "use of one's powers") is traded.<sup>28</sup>

Although citizens thus form a particular class in the commonwealth, Kant insists that the public law, on which all rights depend, must none-

24. *A Theory of Justice*, 72f. and 75f.

25. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 294f. (Reiss, 76); see, too, VI, 237f. It should be noted, however, that Kant maintains that there is no real distinction among these principles. See *A Theory of Justice*, 204: "Freedom as equal liberty is the same for all, the question of compensating for a lesser than equal liberty does not arise."

26. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 294 (Reiss, 76). Freedom and equality before the law extend to all members of all classes in the commonwealth. The independence of citizens as co-legislators only applies to propertied classes.

27. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 294f. (Reiss, 76f.). The citizen may be said to *lease*, whereas the non-citizen *sells* his property. The citizen in that way never becomes a servant, the non-citizen always is.

28. Kant, it bears noting, was not terribly confident on this score, conceding "there is something difficult about determining the requirements for being able to claim the standing of a human being who is his own master." See *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 295n (Reiss, 78n).

theless be "the act of a public will," that "of an entire people," i.e., "the *original contract*, which can only spring from the universal (unified) will of the people."<sup>29</sup> But, then, how can public laws be the enactment of the will of an *entire* people, given the *difference* between citizens and noncitizens (or, in more contemporary terms, those with political power and those without it) in the state? How can a civil union with inequalities in political power be the moral choice of someone who desires to treat others as ends and never solely as means?<sup>30</sup>

In Kant's view, such inequality is permissible as long as every member of the commonwealth—the sovereign excepted—has an *equal opportunity* to equal political power or civic independence. (This equal opportunity cannot be merely formal, since legal equality is dependent upon civic independence, the consent of the co-legislators.) Thus—in what might be considered Kant's own version of the difference principle—suffrage can be granted to property-owners alone as long as these citizens or co-legislators respect the right of all members of the commonwealth to acquire property and thus become citizens.

But is this possible without some restriction on inheritance? Even under conditions of the late eighteenth century, it seems inconsistent and certainly naive to suppose otherwise. Moreover, being born into wealth is as little responsible for that good fortune as being born into nobility. Yet the privileges of wealth at birth seem to discriminate against those born in poverty no less than similar privileges Kant deems acceptable if acquired by hard work and unacceptable if due simply to noble lineage.

Kant accordingly condemns certain consequences of unrestricted inheritance. He recognizes that the owner of a large estate in effect negates the possibility of several property-owners of lesser tracts, i.e., several potential co-legislators, were his estate left intact at his death. Legal institutionalization of this state of affairs is at odds with civil equality of opportunity, the right of equal opportunity to civil independence. Any law which grants to the descendants of one class constant ownership and control of such large estates (whether those estates come to be divided up through inheritance or not) treats subjects of the state unequally.<sup>31</sup>

Legislation which perpetuates this form of supremacy of one propertied class over generations is contrary to the natural rights Kant finds in the moral law. To insure the appropriate legislation Kant adds that "the

29. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 294f. (Reiss, 76f.).

30. Kant's concern is no factual arrangement, but "eine blosse Idee der Vernunft, die aber ihre unbezweifelte (praktische) Realität hat: nämlich jeden Gesetzgeber zu verbinden, daß er seine Gesetze so gebe, als sie aus dem vereinigten Willen eines ganzen Volks haben entspringen können, und jeden Unterthan, so fern er Bürger sein will, so anzusehen, als ob er zu einem solchen Willen mit zusammen gestimmt habe."

31. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 296 (Reiss, 78).

number of those capable of voting for legislation must be determined in terms of the heads of property-owners, and not in terms of the size of their possessions."<sup>32</sup> Thus Kant construes the principle of independence along the lines of "one citizen, one vote." The strategy is to prevent large property-owners from legalizing unfair inheritance privileges, by giving each citizen, i.e., each landowner, large or small, an equal voice. On this strategy, which presupposes at the very least a sizeable number of "small" over against "large" property-owners, equal opportunity is to be secured by legislation limiting inheritance. The opportunities that need to be rendered equal do not translate into equal distribution of resources or wealth in the society, nor is such maximization the reason for the equal opportunities concerned. The opportunities concerned are those that make possible economic and thereby political self-determination. The securing of such opportunities is a moral imperative.

The Kantian alternative to libertarian and liberal views of distributive justice is now patent, although its implications for contemporary political and economic arrangements are perhaps less obvious. Civil equality is a natural right to the opportunity of having a political voice in the determination of the state. To the extent that the exercise of this right requires a level of economic independence, certain limitations may be placed on the acquisition and disposition of wealth, such as inheritance taxes. The aim of this redistribution, however, is not a more equitable allocation of wealth, but an equal share in political power.<sup>33</sup>

32. Ibid.

33. *A Theory of Justice*, 152: "Thus in adopting a serial order we are in effect making a special assumption in the original position, namely, that the parties know that the conditions of their society, whatever they are, admit the effective realization of the equal liberties." Ibid., 221: "Justice as fairness begins with the idea . . . each person is fairly represented." Given these stipulative remarks, Rawls's original position avoids the inequality that is the focus of Kant's concern. However, even if this methodological difference is taken into account, there remains a significant difference in the kinds of equality of opportunity the two thinkers would countenance as a natural right and moral imperative.

## Chapter 4

### JACOBI AND KANT

F. H. Jacobi's intellectual career is punctuated by his encounters and critical engagement with Kant's philosophy. He recounts how, already at the age of twenty, he found "nothing more adequate" than the suggestions and explanations in Kant's *Untersuchungen über die Deutlichkeit der Grundsätze der natürlichen Theologie und Moral* and how, a short time later, he was delighted to discover in Kant's *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund des Daseyns Gottes* a corroboration of his own misgivings with the "Cartesian proof."<sup>1</sup> Some twenty years later in the opening salvos of his dispute with Mendelssohn over Lessing's sympathies for Spinoza he appeals at key junctures to the authority of Kant's philosophy.<sup>2</sup> A year later, after Kant distanced himself from those appeals, he completes what he construes

1. *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus. Ein Gespräch* (Breslau: Gottl. Löwe, 1787), 74f., 84ff. n. (hereafter "*Idealismus und Realismus*," followed by the page number), later published in Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Werke*, ed. J. F. Köppen and C. J. F. Roth, vol. II (Leipzig: Fleisher, 1815; reproduced, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), II, 184, 188–91 (hereafter referred to as "JW" followed by the volume and page numbers). For a translation of the original edition of the dialogue, see Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel "Allwill,"* trans. with an introductory study, notes, and bibliography by George di Giovanni (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 173–251 (hereafter referred to as "di Giovanni").

2. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza, in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (Breslau: Gottl. Löwe, 1785) (hereafter referred to as "*Über die Lehre des Spinoza*," followed by the page number) and *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi wider Mendelssohns Beschuldigungen betreffend die Briefe über die Lehre des Spinoza in dessen Schreiben an die Freunde Lessings* (Leipzig: Georg Joachim Goeschen, 1786). The first of these two works appeared in September of 1785, one month before the appearance of Mendelssohn's *Morgenstunden, oder Vorlesungen über das Daseyn Gottes* (Berlin: Voß, 1785); the second appeared in April of 1786, four months after the appearance of Mendelssohn's *An die Freunde Lessings. Ein Anhang zu Herrn Jacobis Briefwechsel über die Lehre des Spinoza* (Berlin: Voß, 1786). Both works were reissued with extensive supplements in *Ueber die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn. Neue vermehrte Ausgabe* (Breslau: Gottl. Löwe, 1789) and then published in Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, *Werke*, ed. J. F. Köppen and C. J. F. Roth, vol. IV/1 and IV/2 (Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer, 1819; reproduced, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), JW IV/1, 1–253 and JW IV/2, 169–276. For an English translation of the original edition of the letters, see di Giovanni, 253–338.

as his own critique of pure reason in the dialogue *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus*, complete with a critical assessment of transcendental idealism. Two years later in a much expanded version of his letters on Spinoza he intersperses even more frequent appeals to the authority of the critical philosophy with an occasional reproach of it.<sup>3</sup> A little over a decade later in a work published in 1802 but “begun several years before,” he completes his most sustained criticism of Kant’s philosophy, faulting it for, in effect, asserting the primacy of the understanding over reason.<sup>4</sup> Nine years later in *Von den Göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung* he explains how the undue restrictions placed by Kant on both reason and the understanding unwittingly laid the groundwork for “a second Spinozism,” epitomized by the idealist excesses of Fichte and Schelling.<sup>5</sup> Finally, four years before his death in 1819, Jacobi decides that the best way to provide his readers with a fitting introduction to his corpus is to develop at length the contrast between his and Kant’s philosophical positions.<sup>6</sup>

Kant, Jacobi’s senior by twenty years, was clearly never as preoccupied with Jacobi’s thought as Jacobi was with his. Nevertheless, Kant explicitly took aim at the younger man’s views on two occasions, the 1786 essay *Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren?*<sup>7</sup> and the 1796 essay *Von einem neuerdings erhobenen vornehmen Ton in der Philosophie*.<sup>8</sup> In the intervening years, he engaged in a respectful, even amicable correspondence with Jacobi.<sup>9</sup> Kant even arranged to have one of the very first copies of the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* sent to Jacobi, right off the press.<sup>10</sup> Not incidentally, the refinement of the doctrine of rational belief in the *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* and the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* as well as the treatment of Spinoza in the latter reflect Kant’s concern with the possibilities of having his critique of rationalist metaphysics appropriated to a project such as Jacobi’s.

The possible influence of Jacobi’s early writings on Kant’s thought, especially during the productive last three years of the 1780s, and the

3. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn. Neue vermehrte Ausgabe* (Breslau: Gottl. Löwe, 1789), reproduced in JW IV; cf. JW IV/1 192n, 218n, 222n; JW IV/2, 76n, 92n–94n, 131n.

4. Cf. *Über das Unternehmen des Kriticismus die Vernunft zu Verstande zu bringen und die Philosophie überhaupt eine neue Absicht zu geben* in JW III (1816), 81–83.

5. *Von den Göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung* (Leipzig: Fleischer, 1811), reproduced in JW III, 369–72, 432.

6. Cf. “Vorrede zugleich Einleitung in des Verfassers sämtliche Schriften” in JW II, 3–123, especially 25f., 34.

7. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 131–48.

8. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, III, 387–406.

9. Cf. *Kant’s Briefwechsel*, vol. II: 1789–94, reprinted in *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, XI, Nos. 375 (August 30, 1789 and Jacobi, 75–77), 389 (November 16, 1789 from Jacobi, 101–5), and 393 (December 14, 1789 to Jacobi, 112).

10. *Kant’s Briefwechsel*, vol. II, 145.



import of Jacobi's ongoing struggle with the critical philosophy for the idealistic turn taken by Kant's successors in the ensuing decades are issues that form the horizon, but not the immediate object of the following investigation. Instead, the following study confines itself to the first round of Jacobi's and Kant's critical engagement with one another between 1785 and 1787. There are three stages to this first round, corresponding to their relevant writings at the time, and each part of the following paper is accordingly devoted to a stage in this engagement: first, Jacobi's *Auseinandersetzung* with rationalist metaphysics, together with the use he makes of Kant's philosophy in both the letters to Mendelssohn and the response to the latter's "accusations"; second, Kant's explicit polemic against Jacobi in *Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren?*; and third, Jacobi's ensuing critique of the critical philosophy in the dialogue *Idealismus und Realismus*.

There are at least three reasons why this first round of Jacobi's and Kant's mutual confrontation is interesting in its own right. In the first place, in the course of explaining why Kant became involved in the *Pantheismusstreit* at all, it clarifies the nature of the threat he faced of having his doctrine of rational faith assimilated to other doctrines that also defined themselves by their opposition to a rationalist metaphysics and by their belief in a living deity. Secondly and closely related to the first reason, the confrontation reveals the prevailing conception of Spinozism and its incompatibility with traditional theism.<sup>11</sup> Thirdly, it contains some of the era's most influential criticisms of the critical philosophy. At this time, in concert with his elaboration of a realist conception of reason, Jacobi formulates his celebrated critique of the Kantian concept of the thing in itself. Arguably even more important, however, is his sketch of the historical character of faith and reason as an alternative, not only to a rationalist, but also to a critical account of reason.

### *Auseinandersetzung* with Spinoza's System: Jacobi's Early Philosophy of Faith

In his dispute with Mendelssohn, Jacobi contends that Lessing candidly embraced "the actual teaching of Spinoza" and not the half-heart-

11. The influence of Jacobi's interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy extends not only to the German idealists (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel) but also to Kant himself. Toward the end of 1785 Kant confesses to Hamann that he had never studied Spinoza's system seriously. In 1789 Kant praises Jacobi for demonstrating the difficulties with the Spinozistic system. Cf. Johann Georg Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, ed. Walther Ziesemer and Arthur Henkel (Wiesbaden: Insel, 1955–79), vol. VI, nos. 884 (October 22–30, 1785) and 900 (November 30–December 4, 1785), pp. 107 and 161.



ed version of that doctrine “arbitrarily concocted” by Mendelssohn to be somehow reconcilable with theism.<sup>12</sup> Among Jacobi’s central aims in the dispute are to show that there is a peerless trenchancy to Spinoza’s system from a purely rationalist point of view, that a rigorous and forthright analysis of the very principles underlying the Leibnizian-Wolffian rationalist philosophy embraced by Mendelssohn ultimately leads to Spinoza’s system as its logical conclusion,<sup>13</sup> that there is, accordingly, no third alternative to Spinozism and Jacobi’s own version of theism, and that the theistic alternative can only be embraced by a *salto mortale*.<sup>14</sup> Jacobi’s theistic alternative is a belief in “an intelligent, personal cause of the world,” a “personal, extramundane divinity.”<sup>15</sup>

Not surprisingly, Jacobi was criticized both for what seemed to be his endorsement of Spinozism and for the apparent irrationality of his appeal to a *salto mortale*. Indeed, Mendelssohn accuses him of esoterically propounding Spinozism, while exoterically upholding theistic belief.<sup>16</sup> On the surface these criticisms are unfair, but they are also neither wholly unfounded nor without a certain merit. Indeed, the merit of these criticisms forms the basis of Kant’s original polemic with Jacobi.

As for the first criticism, namely, the charge of Spinozism, there can be no denying that Jacobi takes pains to spell out the cogency of the argument underlying Spinoza’s philosophy,<sup>17</sup> that he speaks reverently of Spinoza’s “tranquil spirit,” and that he acknowledges that Spinoza guided him to “the complete conviction” that certain things cannot be unraveled but simply must be taken as we find them.<sup>18</sup> As for the alleged irrationality of Jacobi’s *salto mortale*, there are, it must be admitted, many places in which he elaborates his conception of faith in contrast to rea-

12. JW IV/2, 198–99; see also *ibid.*, 181: “Mit dem geläuterten Pantheismus, den er zu seiner Genesung einnehmen soll, wäre er, nach meinem Urteil, nur ein Halbkopf; und dazu will ich ihn nach seinem Tode nicht durch Mendelssohn erziehen lassen.” Jacobi extends his criticism to Herder’s claim that Lessing—indeed, Spinoza himself—remained a Spinozist only “halfway”; see JW IV/2, 83–92; also IV/2, 248.

13. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 14, 23–27, 172 (JW IV/1, 55–56, 65–68, 221–22).

14. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 17 (JW IV/1, 59).

15. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 17, 21 (JW IV/1, 59, 63).

16. JW IV/2, 206.

17. Spinoza’s actual teaching, Jacobi submits, is incontrovertible as far as “the logical use of the intellect” is concerned; cf. JW IV/1, xxxvii: “Meine Briefe über die Lehre des Spinoza wurden deshalb nicht geschrieben um Ein System durch das Andre zu verdrängen, sondern um die Unüberwindlichkeit des Spinozismus von Seiten des logischen Verstandesgebrauches darzuthun, und wie man ganz folgerecht verfahre, wenn man bey dem Ziele dieser Wissenschaft, daß kein Gott sey, anlange. Sie war aus sich selber nicht zu widerlegen.”

18. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 28 (JW IV/1, 69–70); JW IV/2, 225–26, 238–39n, especially 245; cf. di Giovanni, 85: “Jacobi was using a Spinozistic assumption (intellectual intuition) to combat the Spinozistic system, apparently without realizing that that assumption was devised to serve the conceptual needs of the system.”

son, at least the reason of the *Aufklärer*. Nevertheless, in Jacobi's own mind (and herein lies the merit of the otherwise superficial charges of Spinozism and irrationalism) it is precisely on the basis of the lesson learned from Spinoza that he refuses to let his opponents completely appropriate the legitimate use of the term "reason" and mounts both his critique of Spinozism and a rational defense of his own version of theism.<sup>19</sup> The import of Jacobi's strategy is clear: his argument for theism is no more irrational or rational than the argument for Spinozism, the supreme rationalist system.

According to Jacobi, Spinoza to his credit takes on the Cabbalist problem of emanation by rejecting or, more precisely, by challenging the soundness of the premises of the problem. The emanationist's problem is that of explaining the transition from the infinite to the finite. However, every formulation of that transition violates the principle *ex nihilo nil fit*. Because he refuses to surrender this rational principle, Spinoza infers that there is no beginning to the finite and that the latter must be understood to be with the infinite, indeed, to be part of it from all eternity.<sup>20</sup> The criticism that an infinite series of effects is impossible is refuted by the fact that any series that is not supposed to spring from nothing must be infinite.<sup>21</sup> In effect, he solves the Cabbalist problem by replacing the emanating divinity with "a purely immanent *Ensoph*, an indwelling, in itself eternally unalterable cause of the world."<sup>22</sup>

One of the staples of Jacobi's interpretation of Spinoza (that, incidentally, sets his interpretation apart from those of Wolff and Mendelssohn) is his recognition that the infinity of the Spinozistic substance is not to be understood as the collection of finite things, but rather as "a

19. For the argument that there is no third alternative, see JW IV/2, 78, 80, 92; for the arguments against Spinozism, propelling the *salto mortale* of theism, see *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 17ff. (JW IV/1, 59ff.); JW IV/2, 76–79, 92–95 (the last mentioned of which cites in its favor Kant's *Einzig möglicher Beweisgrund*, 43f. and 52). The exposé of Lessing's alleged Spinozism provided Jacobi with the occasion to develop his own curious contention that, because Spinoza's system represents the most consistent, trenchant, but atheistic conclusions of reason, they must be rejected in favor of the claims of theistic faith.

20. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 119f. (JW IV/1, 173): "Wenn das Endliche von Ewigkeit her bey dem Unendlichen war, so kann es nicht ausser demselben seyn; denn wenn es ausser demselben wäre, so wäre es, entweder ein anderes für sich bestehendes Wesen, oder es wäre von dem bestehenden Dinge aus Nichts hervorgebracht worden." The principle *a nihilo nihil fit* is depicted as the "*Geist des Spinozismus*"; cf. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 14, 59f. (JW IV/1, 56, 125f.).

21. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 16 (JW IV/1, 57).

22. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 14 (JW IV/1, 56): "Er verwarf also jeden *Uebergang* des Unendlichen zum Endlichen; überhaupt alle *Causus transitorias, secundarias* oder *remotas*; und setzte an die Stelle des emanirenden ein nur *immanentes* Ensoph; eine inwohnende, ewig in sich unveränderliche Ursache der Welt, . . ." See also *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 171 (JW IV/1, 217–20): "Die Cabbalistische Philosophie ist, als *Philosophie*, nichts anderes, als *unentwickelter, oder neu verworrenen* Spinozismus."

whole, the parts of which can only be thought in and in terms of it.”<sup>23</sup> In order to render this concept “more understandable,” Jacobi cites passages from Kant’s *Transcendental Aesthetic* on the relation of the parts of space to the all-encompassing space (A25) and the parts of time to the infinity of time (A32), adding that these passages are, as he puts it, “completely in the spirit of Spinoza.”<sup>24</sup> Like the Kantian space or time, the Spinozistic substance is a whole that is more than any collection of parts and yet is not something that exists apart from its parts.

Though Spinoza calls this substance “God,” Jacobi himself does not regard Spinozism, “properly understood,” as anything short of atheism.<sup>25</sup> His reason for insisting on the atheistic character of Spinozism is its claim that the supreme being “considered in itself, that is to say, truly considered” has and can have neither intellect nor will.<sup>26</sup> “In the first cause which is infinite in nature neither individual thoughts nor individual determinations of the will can be encountered—but rather only the inner, first, universal primal material of it.”<sup>27</sup>

Jacobi himself refuses to countenance a God devoid of intellect and will, but his refusal cannot be consigned to some sort of irrational faith on his part. In the Spinoza letters he advances at least three related arguments for rejecting Spinozism, arguments contesting respectively the fatalism, reductionism, and, for lack of a better word, the rationalism of Spinoza’s system. The most prominent argument is based upon a basic belief in the capacity for free action, that is to say, action consequent upon deliberation and choice.<sup>28</sup> The belief is basic for Jacobi in the sense that it is neither reducible to nor controvertible by other beliefs and he

23. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 123 (JW IV/1, 167): “Dieser Inbegriff ist keine ungereimte Zusammensetzung endlicher Dinge, die ein Unendliches ausmachen; sondern, der strengsten Bedeutung nach, ein Ganzes, dessen Theile nur in und nach ihm gedacht werden können.” See especially *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 154f. n. (missing in the second edition). On Wolff’s and Mendelssohn’s differing and supposedly more superficial understanding of Spinoza in this regard, see JW IV/1, 118f. (not in original edition) and Klaus Hammacher, *Die Philosophie Friedrich Heinrich Jacobis* (Munich: Fink, 1969), 55f.

24. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 123 n.: “Folgende Stellen von Kant, die ganz im Geiste des Spinoza sind, mögen zu Erläuterung dienen.” In subsequent editions Jacobi deletes the reference to “the spirit of Spinoza” and adds that it goes without saying that the Kantian philosophy is not to be charged with Spinozism merely because it helps elucidate a feature of the latter.

25. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 170f. n. (JW IV/1, 216–17n); cf. JW IV/1, xxxvi: “Solches ward mir klar, und daß darum Spinozismus Atheismus sey.”

26. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 136 (JW IV/1, 186); see also *ibid.*, 15f., 129ff. (JW IV/1, 56f., 181f., 186); *Ethics* I, Proposition xxxi.

27. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 16, 135f. (JW IV/1, 58, 185f.).

28. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 29 (JW IV/1, 70, slightly altered): “Ich habe keinen Begriff, der inniger als der von den Endursachen ware; keine lebendigere Überzeugung, als daß ich *thue was ich denke*, anstatt, daß ich *nur denken sollte was ich thue*.” See also *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 18 (JW IV/1, 59).

accordingly subscribes to it with the sort of “complete conviction” that Spinoza taught him was to be accorded such things. Even a conviction based upon rational grounds gets its force from belief.<sup>29</sup> Yet the belief in freedom is incompatible with the fatalism that, in Jacobi’s view, is entailed by Spinoza’s conception of substance or God. So, while this belief points, to be sure, to a source of knowing and acting that is inexplicable, it is itself sufficient reason for rejecting the Spinozistic God or, at least, as adequate as the reason on which Spinoza bases his argument.<sup>30</sup>

A second objection to the Spinozistic system, closely related to the first, is based upon the integrity of feelings, thoughts, discussion, discoveries, philosophies, arts, forms of government, and the like. Such things are not reducible to concepts such as extension, motion, degree of velocity; instead, they can be understood only by countenancing final causes. However, as Jacobi construes it, Spinoza’s system is committed, not only to a universal mechanism, devoid of final causes, but also to such an unacceptable reductionism.<sup>31</sup>

Even if trenchant, these first two objections to Spinoza’s philosophy do not by themselves establish anything more than its inadequacy. To be sure, Jacobi appears to assume that teleological phenomena, if they cannot be explained away, imply the existence of an extrawordly, intelligent creator. Yet if this weighty assumption be granted, the arguments against the fatalism and reductionism of Spinoza’s system still do not constitute an argument for the sort of theism that Jacobi is bent on advancing, that is to say, the belief in a personal, benevolent God. A third objection, also closely linked to the first two, prepares the way for Jacobi to make up for that deficiency.

Jacobi’s third objection is directed at the *a priori* and strictly theoretical pretensions of Spinoza’s rationalism. “We do not create and do not instruct ourselves,” Jacobi protests, “we are in no way *a priori* and are able to know or do nothing *a priori*; we can experience nothing—without experience.”<sup>32</sup> The protest is not merely a plea for the common

29. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 162ff., 19 (JW IV/1, 210f., 60).

30. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 29ff. (JW IV/1, 70f.); cf. JW IV/1, 220n (not in original edition): “Da ich selbst nun, wie ich wiederholt bekannt habe, das Daseyn eines *Gottes* darum allein nicht läugne, weil ich mich durch mein Gewissen und tiefstes innerstes Bewußtseyn genöthigt fühle, das Dasein eines allgemeinen *alleinigen* Naturmechanismus zu läugnen; so kann ich unmöglich eingestehen, daß derjenige, dessen höchstes Wesen das blinde, wenn auch *lebendige*, Fatum selbst ist, einen Gott glaube und lehre. Das Fatum vertilgt nothwendig den Gott; der Gott nur das Fatum. Also beharre ich auf dem Urtheil, daß Spinozismus Atheismus sey.”

31. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 18f. (JW IV/1, 59ff.); cf. also *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 32 (JW IV/1, 73) where Jacobi sketches a broader argument directed at what he regards as the unacceptable reductionism in Spinoza’s system.

32. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 180, 185 (JW IV/1 230f.; 236f.), especially 185 (236):

sense realism of Thomas Reid, despite the latter's considerable influence on Jacobi's thinking.<sup>33</sup> Rather these remarks introduce what is arguably the most pregnant and influential aspect of Jacobi's thought, namely, an insistence on the ineluctably historical and practical character of philosophy.<sup>34</sup>

The method and principles of Spinoza's philosophy require the capacity to consider things in purely theoretical fashion *sub specie aeternitatis*. But for Jacobi such a capacity is not humanly possible. Indeed, he goes so far as to assert that a "living philosophy" cannot be anything other than history and that assertion precisely means, as he recounts it, that principles and all knowledge emerge from the actions of human beings, actions that are themselves the results of passions and proclivities which in turn are based upon the objects we encounter and the way we represent them.<sup>35</sup> "I do not exist," as Jacobi plaintively puts it, "through myself alone."<sup>36</sup>

Jacobi's claim, in the context of his critique of Spinoza, that philosophy cannot be anything other than history amounts to far more than a mere assertion of the priority of life and will over the intellect. "All history goes forward in instruction and law," he observes, adding that human culture (*Bildung*) itself takes its bearings, not from principles of reason or moving admonitions, but from that very instruction and law, that is to say, from paradigms and discipline, counsel and deeds, from service and command.<sup>37</sup> History and hence philosophy as well are thus to be conceived, not as abstract endeavors issuing in the theoretical indicatives of

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"Die Philosophie kann ihre Materie nicht erschaffen; die liegt immer da in gegenwärtiger oder vergangenen Geschichte." To introduce this third and final objection Jacobi repeats one of his favorite passages from Pascal (it prefaces his dialogue as well): *La nature confond les Pyrrhoniens, et la raison confond les Dogmatistes. Nous avons une impuissance à prouver, invincible à tout le Dogmatisme*; cf. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 55 (JW IV/1, 122) and JW II, 1.

33. Cf. Günther Baum, *Vernunft und Erkenntnis: Die Philosophie F. H. Jacobis* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1969), 42–49, 69–83.

34. Jacobi pleads, "Daß ihre Geschichte [d.h. die Geschichte der Menschen] nicht aus ihrer Denkungsart entspringe, sondern ihre Denkungsart aus ihrer Geschichte"; cf. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 185f. (JW IV/1, 237); cf. also *ibid.*, 209 (JW IV/1, 248): "Im Gegenheil entwickelt sich der Verstand des Menschen durch seinen Willen, . . ."

35. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 183 (JW IV/1, 234f.): "Und kann lebendige Philosophie je etwas anderes als Geschichte seyn? Wie die Gegenstände, so die Vorstellungen; wie die Vorstellungen, so die Neigungen und Leidenschaften; wie die Neigungen und Leidenschaften, so die Handlungen; wie die Handlungen, so die Grundsätze und die ganze Erkenntnis." Cf. also *ibid.*, 210 (IV/1, 249).

36. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 210 (JW IV/1, 249).

37. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 197f. (JW IV/1, 241): "Alle Geschichte geht in Unterricht und Gesetze vorwärts aus, und alle Bildung der Menschen schreibt sich von ihnen her. Nicht von Vernunftgesetzen oder rührenden Ermahnungen; sondern von Anweisung, Darstellung, Vorbild, Zucht, Hülfe, Rath und That, Dienst und Befehl."

a rationalist metaphysics, but rather as concrete ways humanity progressively cultivates or forms itself in virtue.

It may seem that these considerations, like the first two objections, while perhaps presenting something of a challenge to Spinoza's mode of philosophizing, do not amount to anything like an adequate argument for theism. However, the historical turn that Jacobi is urging demands a vital relationship to the traditionally conceived, personal God. For history, as Jacobi conceives it, demonstrates that there is a necessary relationship between the exercise of virtue and the awareness of such a God and, indeed, between the corresponding levels of that exercise and awareness. Moreover, as is evident from the education of children, the practice of virtue is initially the fruit of respect and obedience, leading us to imitate the actions of our fathers and forefathers before we understand the point of their traditions or instructions.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, it could only be our "conceit," Jacobi argues, that displaces what our history and traditions teach us, namely, that "the first, most necessary need, as much for the individual human being as for the society, is a God" and that God looked after us even before we existed.<sup>39</sup>

This historical argument with its appeal to tradition is sharply at odds with Kant's conception of reason. Indeed, in later editions of the letters and elsewhere, Jacobi takes Kant to task for suggesting that traditional theism and Spinoza's atheism form less than an exclusive disjunction or, in other words, that deism as a belief in God can, in addition to theism as a belief in a living God, be legitimately distinguished from atheism.<sup>40</sup> At the same time, however, in his first two contributions to the *Pantheismusstreit* Jacobi makes both implicit and explicit appeals to the authority of Kant in support of key parts of his argument.

The implicit appeal surfaces in his report of the conversation with Lessing. Jacobi faults Spinoza for falling prey to inconsistency and even sophistry when, in an effort to explain everything, he attempts to apply his doctrine, in the final chapters of the *Ethics*, to human conduct. When Lessing rejoins, "And who does not want to explain?" Jacobi makes a reply that must have sounded at least to some of his contemporaries like an endorsement of the critical philosophy. "Some do not want to explain what is incomprehensible, but rather want merely to know the

38. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 199, 201f. (JW IV/1, 242f.).

39. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 198 (JW IV/1, 242) and di Giovanni, 246.

40. In later editions Jacobi remarks that the code word "cosmotheism," employed to characterize Pliny's belief (that the universe and God were the same thing) is a euphemism, like Kant's talk of deism at *KrV* A631–33/B659–61; cf. JW IV/1, 217–18n and JW II, 475–76n.

boundary where it begins and only to acknowledge that it is there. I believe that such a person secures the most room for authentic human truth in itself."<sup>41</sup>

As for explicit appeals to Kant's writings, the first such appeal has already been noted. Jacobi invokes the accounts of space and time in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* for merely elucidative purposes, namely, to elaborate the nature and tenability of Spinoza's account of substance as an infinite whole. He also cites Kant's account of transcendental apperception as the "pure, original, unchangeable consciousness" in an attempt to illuminate the nature of the "absolute thinking" attributed by Spinoza to the one universal being.<sup>42</sup> This second appeal is much more tendentious and less innocent than the first and it is undoubtedly a source of Kant's early annoyance with Jacobi and low estimation of him.<sup>43</sup>

However, he was probably even more upset with Jacobi's only other appeal to the authority of the critical philosophy in the initial publication of his first two contributions to the *Pantheismusstreit*. It forms part of his response to the charge of fanaticism. Mendelssohn accuses Jacobi of being a fanatic for maintaining that God's existence cannot be "apodictically demonstrated" and that, as a result, people can only believe in God and make themselves steadfast in that belief through practice.<sup>44</sup> Jacobi responds to the charge by claiming that his position is equivalent to that of Kant. "And Kant, who is teaching the same thing for more than six years, has he not defamed reason? Is he not a fanatic? Does he not want to help along some blind or miraculous faith?"<sup>45</sup> The import is clear, Jacobi insists: if he is a fanatic, then so is Kant. To corroborate the point, he cites at length from the third section of the Canon of Pure Reason ("Vom Meinen, Wissen und Glauben") where Kant emphasizes that we have moral rather than logical certainty of God's existence and that an upright faith presupposes moral goodness.<sup>46</sup>

41. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 30f. (JW IV/1, 71): "Wer nicht erklären will was ungreiflich ist, sondern nur die Grenze wissen so es anfängt, und nur erkennen, daß es da ist: von dem glaube ich, daß er den mehresten Raum für ächte menschliche Wahrheit in sich aus gewinnt." Cf. also *ibid.*, 31f. (JW IV/1, 72): "Nach meinem Urtheil ist das größte Verdienst des Forschers, *Daseyn* zu enthüllen, und zu offenbaren. Erklärung ist ihm Mittel, Weg zum Ziele, nächster—niemals letzter Zweck. Sein letzter Zweck ist, was sich nicht erklären läßt: das Unauflösliche, Unmittelbare, Einfache."

42. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 140–41 n. (JW IV/1, 191–92 N. 16).

43. Cf. *Kant's Briefwechsel*, no. 267 (April 7, 1786 to Marcus Herz).

44. JW IV/2, 255–56.

45. JW IV/2, 256.

46. *KrV* A828–29n/B857–58n; JW IV/2, 256–59. Jacobi adds (at least in the later edition, JW IV/2 259n) that he has no intention of bringing the Kantian philosophy down to his level or of elevating his philosophy to that of the Kantian.



## In Defense of Rational Faith: Kant's Polemics against Jacobi's Philosophy of Faith

Kant could scarcely avoid becoming entangled in the *Pantheismusstreit*. On the one hand, there was Hamann in Königsberg, advising Jacobi to refrain from becoming further involved in the fray and at the same time emboldening Kant to criticize Mendelssohn. On the other hand, there was an assortment of Mendelssohn's friends or, at least, Jacobi's enemies in Berlin, such as Marcus Herz and Johann Erich Biester, attempting to enlist Kant's efforts on their side by calling his attention to the use Jacobi was making of his writings.<sup>47</sup> "An enlightened philosopher," Biester writes Kant, "can probably endure no more odious charge than this: that his principles furthered a decidedly dogmatic atheism and thereby fanaticism."<sup>48</sup> Biester, one of the editors of the *Berlinische Monatschrift*, also warns Kant that Jacobi's citing of him as a "concurring witness" could have dire political consequences for the freedom of thought presently enjoyed.<sup>49</sup>

Two months after writing this letter Biester receives Kant's guarded response to his urgings, the essay *Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren?*<sup>50</sup> The source of the essay's title is Mendelssohn's acknowledgment of the necessity of appealing to common sense or "healthy reason" as "a specific means of guidance" in the speculative use of reason. Kant charges that this sort of appeal and, in particular, the ambiguity of contrasting one use of reason with another (the exercise of common sense with speculation) have two undesirable effects. They undermine Mendelssohn's own high regard for the power of speculative reason and set the stage for common sense to usurp reason and become a basis for fanaticism. According to Kant, this is precisely what happened in the dispute between Mendelssohn and Jacobi, especially as expounded by Thomas Wizenmann.<sup>51</sup> Kant is quick to add that he does not want to impute to either party of the controversy the intention of introducing "so ruinous a manner of thinking." Nevertheless, he clearly endorses what he takes to be the overriding sense of Mendelssohn's position, namely, that our

47. Cf. Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn: A Biographical Study* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1973), pp. 698–712; *Kant's Briefwechsel*, vol. I, reprinted in *Kants Gesammelte Schriften*, X, nos. 248 (October 16, 1785 from Moses Mendelssohn, 413–14), 251 (November 8, 1785 from Johann Erich Biester, 416–20), 259 (February 1786 from Christian Gottfried Schütz, 430–31), 260 (February 27, 1786 from Marcus Herz, 431–33).

48. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, X, 455.

49. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, X, 457.

50. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 131–48 and 387–406.

51. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 133–34n.



orientation should be based solely on reason, “not some alleged, secret sense of the truth, under the name of belief, on which tradition or revelation can be propped up without the agreement of reason.”<sup>52</sup>

Kant proceeds to articulate his own “expanded and more precisely determined concept of orienting oneself.”<sup>53</sup> In general, orienting oneself requires some sort of subjective basis for differentiating, even if it be merely the capacity to distinguish right from left. Analogously, when we move beyond the boundaries of experience and must orient ourselves in thinking, we can only orient ourselves by some “subjective means,” namely, “the feeling of the need proper to reason.”<sup>54</sup> By “reason” here Kant means our capacity to think and this capacity is governed by universally binding principles of logic. The need of reason, so understood, is accordingly a legitimate subjective basis for making assumptions when we have no access to an objective basis. As such, it is the source of concepts of supersensible objects. When there genuinely is no way to assure ourselves of the real possibility of such an object, we can only make sure that the concept of it is not contradictory and then, by means of the pure concepts of the understanding, relate it to objects of experience. In this way the existence of the supersensible object is by no means secured, but at least its suitability for the experiential use of reason can be countenanced.<sup>55</sup>

While there are many areas in which reason may entertain something supersensible but feel no need to assume its existence, it is quite different in the case of the concept of God. Reason feels a need to posit the concept of God in the sense of a concept of the unlimited as the basis for the concept of everything limited. But it also feels a need to posit God’s existence, “without which it can provide no satisfactory basis . . . at least for the purposiveness and order which one encounters to such an astounding degree everywhere.”<sup>56</sup>

This argument for the qualified legitimacy of assuming God’s existence has been made on the basis of the theoretical need of reason. But such a need, Kant observes, is conditioned; in other words, we have to assume God’s existence if we want to make a judgment about the causes of contingencies within the order of purposes in the world. There is, however, another need of reason, namely, in its practical employment

52. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 134; 140.

53. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 134; 140.

54. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 136; *ibid.* 136n: “Sich im Denken überhaupt *orientieren*, heißt also: sich bei der Unzulänglichkeit der objectiven Principien der Vernunft im Fürwahrhalten nach einem subjectiven Princip derselben bestimmen.”

55. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 136f.

56. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 138.

and this need is “far more important” because it is unconditioned.<sup>57</sup> We do not have to engage in speculation, but we do have to make practical decisions and have, moreover, an obligation to make those decisions in conformity with moral laws. The practical use of reason is concerned with the moral laws and they all lead to the idea of the highest good, that is to say, to the idea of something securing the greatest happiness proportionate with morality. “Now reason *needs* to assume such a *dependent* highest good and for this purpose a supreme intelligence as the highest *independent* good.”<sup>58</sup>

In order to distinguish such an assumption based upon the need of reason from a judgment based on either an insight (Mendelssohn) or an inspiration (Wizenmann), Kant identifies it as a matter of rational belief. While every belief must be rational (“since the ultimate touchstone of truth is always reason”), rational belief is the sort “grounded in no other data than those contained in pure reason.”<sup>59</sup> In general, believing is distinct from opining. To believe something is to accept it on grounds that are sufficient from a subjective point of view with the full awareness that they are inadequate from an objective point of view. To have an opinion about something is to accept it on grounds that are objective, but with the awareness that they are not quite sufficient. Yet opinions may ultimately become matters of knowledge. The grounds of pure rational belief are, by contrast, strictly subjective and, hence, can never be transformed into knowledge. While the satisfaction of the need of theoretical reason amounts to a rational hypothesis, the satisfaction of the need of practical reason amounts to a rational belief or, in other words, a “postulate” of pure reason. By “postulate” here Kant means a belief that is not to any degree inferior to knowing, even though (and, indeed, in part because) it is decidedly different from knowing.<sup>60</sup> Rational belief accordingly is, Kant urges, the “compass” by means of which

57. That is to say, “we are compelled to presuppose the existence of God not merely if we *want* to make judgments, but because we *have to make judgments*.” See *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 139.

58. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 139. Kant is quick to add that this assumption is not required as a motivation to observe the moral law, “but rather only for the sake of lending the concept of the highest good objective reality.”

59. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 140f.

60. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 141: “Dagegen der *Vernunftglaube*, der auf dem Bedürfnis ihres Gebrauchs in *praktischer* Absicht beruht, ein *Postulat* der Vernunft heißen könnte: nicht als ob es eine Einsicht wäre, welche aller logischen Forderung zur Gewißheit Genüge thäte, sondern weil dieses Fürwahrhalten (wenn in dem Menschen alles nur moralisch gut bestellt ist) dem Grade nach keinem Wissen nachsteht, ob es gleich der Art nach davon völlig unterscheiden ist.” Cf. *ibid.*, 141–42n, where Kant affirms his complete certainty that no one will be able to refute the claim “there is a God,” since such a refutation would require an insight unavailable to a human being.

a speculative thinker can orient himself and the common, moral man can, in a practical as well as a theoretical respect find his way “completely suited to the entire purpose of his vocation.”<sup>61</sup>

Kant insists that the concept of God and even the conviction of his existence can only be encountered in reason. They are not the result of any sort of inspiration or information, of whatever authority. In the first place, even if one were to experience some phenomenon that has an effect on his or her feelings unlike anything that he or she has encountered in nature, it would still be necessary to make use of a concept of God in order to determine whether the phenomenon conforms to what is characteristic of something divine-like. In the second place and more importantly, even if that phenomenon did not contradict the concept of God, it would never be sufficient to prove God’s existence, since the concept of God stipulates an infiniteness to which no experience or intuition can be adequate.<sup>62</sup>

Jacobi is the unmistakable target of these remarks. Kant insists that reason is the sole source of both the concept of God and any basis for assuming God’s existence, because the failure to do so leaves the door wide open, as he puts it, “to every sort of fanaticism, superstition, indeed, even to atheism.” Jacobi, Kant submits, gives every appearance of having done just that, namely, replacing reason with another, arbitrary sort of belief. Kant concedes that rational belief, as he conceives it, is compatible with the claim that speculative reason is not even in a position of countenancing the possibility of God. But, he emphatically rejects the notion that this rational belief could be in any way reconciled with the view that emerges from Jacobi’s critical interpretation of Spinoza, namely, “that reason could see the impossibility of an object and, nevertheless, recognize its reality on the basis of other sources.”<sup>63</sup>

In a footnote to this discussion Kant expresses amazement and dismay at the fact that some scholars could have found support for Spinozism in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.<sup>64</sup> No doubt he has in mind Jacobi’s remark that certain passages in the *Critique* are “entirely in the spirit of Spinoza.” Kant is also taking the advice of Biester and others to foreclose any suggestion that the critical philosophy abets atheism, especially in light of fears of potential censorship with the changing of the guard in Berlin. Kant accordingly takes pains to underscore the fact that his cri-

61. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 142.

62. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 142f.

63. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 144.

64. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 143–44n; cf. also Henry E. Allison, “Kant’s Critique of Spinoza,” in *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, ed. Richard Kennington (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1980), 203–9.

tique “clips the wings of dogmatism” and that, if there ever was a philosophical system that could be called “dogmatic,” then it is the system of Spinoza. In particular, he draws the contrast between his critical philosophy and Spinoza’s dogmatism on the crucial question of theism.<sup>65</sup> The critical philosophy recognizes the insufficiency of maintaining the possibility of something solely on the basis of the fact that the concept of it is noncontradictory, but neither can it rule out the possibility and hence the believability of something conceived by reason alone. By contrast, Kant contends, Spinozism purports to perceive the impossibility of an entity, the idea of which consists solely in pure concepts of the understanding, without providing the slightest support for this claim.

After drawing this pointed contrast, Kant makes an observation that sums up his critical assessment of Jacobi’s philosophy. “Precisely because of this [namely, its dogmatic claim about the impossibility of the theistic God] Spinozism leads to fanaticism.”<sup>66</sup> According to Kant, Jacobi’s fanaticism is traceable to his embrace of Spinoza’s uncritical conception of reason, as evidenced by the nature of his rejection of Spinoza. It is probably not a coincidence that the wording of Kant’s criticism mirrors Jacobi’s own critique of Spinozism. *Expressis verbis* Jacobi argued, for the same reason, that Spinozism engenders fanatics. In Kant’s view, however, Jacobi apparently failed to see that the basis of his rejection of Spinozism in the Spinoza letters, in other words, his recourse to faith, itself presumes a dogmatic conception of reason.

### *Idealismus und Realismus: Jacobi’s Critique of Pure Reason*

Though Jacobi was bound to be upset with Kant’s criticism, his response to the criticism suggests that he acknowledged at least some of its merit. He set about rethinking his conceptions of faith and reason in the course of developing a sustained criticism of Kant’s philosophy. In the spring of 1787, roughly six months after Kant’s polemical piece appeared, he publishes his reflections in the dialogue *David Hume über den Glauben oder Idealismus und Realismus*.<sup>67</sup> The dialogue, a kind of precis of Jacobi’s early epistemological and metaphysical views, is highly eclectic, incorporating arguments from both Hume and Reid, on the

65. Kant also specifically objects to the Spinozistic notions of “thoughts that themselves think” and accidents that at the same time exist for themselves as subjects.

66. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 143n. Kant ends the essay with an appeal to the fanatics or enthusiasts to reconsider the effects of their position on the possibility of freedom of thought. Cf. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 170–71 n. (JW IV/1, 216–17n).

67. Cf. JW II, 3: “Das folgende Gespräch schließt sich dem Werk über die Lehre des Spinoza an.”

one hand, while expanding his earlier appropriations of both Spinozistic and Leibnizian themes, on the other.<sup>68</sup> The body of the dialogue is explicitly formulated as Jacobi's own critique of pure reason and alternative to transcendental idealism. The emphasis placed, in what follows, upon the extent to which Jacobi's dialogue is a critique of transcendental idealism, bent on establishing the proper meaning of "reason," casts the work in a light somewhat different from that of the otherwise masterful interpretation recently proffered by George di Giovanni.<sup>69</sup>

In the dialogue Jacobi denies teaching "a blind faith" unless that is taken to mean merely the sort of knowing—such as the immediate certainty of external objects, the basis of rational knowledge, or the capacity for volitional action—that is not itself capable of a rigorous proof; for such "knowing," Jacobi submits, there are no more apt terms than "revelation" and what Hume called "belief."<sup>70</sup> The overlapping use of these terms by Jacobi is extremely telling; it underscores the fact that "belief" or "faith" (however *Glaube* is to be translated) is not to be identified with opinions or judgments.<sup>71</sup> Revealed immediately and thereby believed in the simplest perception, that is to say, pre-reflectively and prior to any inference or operation of the intellect, including representation, are, Jacobi contends, both consciousness itself (alternatively, a conception or concept) and external objects.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, in the immediate perception of actual things, he adds, there is something, namely, their objectivity as such or the fact that they are actual, that cannot be displayed in any representation of them.<sup>73</sup> Analogously, while we have "the most in-

68. di Giovanni, 100: "The one indisputable fact is that the Spinozism was in the dialogue and that Jacobi never confronted the issue of its being there. It is perhaps ironic that the philosopher who so clearly saw the irrationalism implicit in the rationalistic metaphysics of the day should not have detected it in his own position."

69. See the latter in di Giovanni, 90–103.

70. JW II, 137–67, 205; see especially the reference to Reid's *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* at the crucial juncture on pages 146–47; the importance of Reid has been emphasized by Baum; see also Manfred Kuehn's *Scottish Common Sense in Germany, 1768–1800: A Contribution to the History of Critical Philosophy* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987); following the reference to Reid, Jacobi makes appeal to the authority of Hume on pages 152–64. As Rehg pointed out in a review of the dialogue in *Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung*, the German *Glaube* ambiguously translates both English words "belief" and "faith," a distinction that, he claims, Jacobi fails to note; cf. di Giovanni, 90. See, however, the following note.

71. Jacobi was fully aware of the difference between ordinary beliefs and religious faith, despite the fact that a single root term "*Glaube*" is employed in each case; see *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 164f. (JW IV/1, 212); Baum, *Vernunft und Erkenntnis*, 21.

72. JW II, 175f., 208; so, too, the notion of cause and effect is based upon "the living experience in ourselves of a power" that is "apparent to itself, freely active, and personal"; see JW II, 201; see also JW II, 260f., where these basic concepts are said to be equivalent to "innate ideas." Cf. also di Giovanni, 93f.

73. JW II, 232, 262. The unrepresentability of the immediate perception of the actual is what distinguishes it from dreams and makes the latter possible; see JW II, 232–35.

timate consciousness" of the soul or of living (the soul being "a certain specific form of life"), neither the soul as such nor living itself can, properly speaking, be said to be represented.<sup>74</sup> From this duality Jacobi infers the reciprocal relatedness of sensing and the sensed and from that reciprocity the universality and necessity of concepts of substance, extension, cause and effect, and succession.<sup>75</sup>

In the wake of the derivation of these concepts Jacobi takes aim at Kant's transcendental idealism. He claims that these concepts, so derived, "have, even *in the things in themselves*, their object independent of the concept, hence a true, *objective* significance."<sup>76</sup> On the face of it, this claim is contradictory, at least as long as some differentiation of levels of concepts is not made. Jacobi promptly provides such a differentiation by developing the notion of pre-representational concepts already mentioned by him in his exposition of Spinoza.<sup>77</sup> He explains that those concepts which have their object "independent of the concept" are what must be given as primary in every experience, such that without what is objective in these basic concepts "no object of a concept would be possible" and without these basic concepts "no knowledge would be possible."<sup>78</sup> With good reason, he adds, people traditionally label judgments and inferences based upon such basic concepts "knowledge a priori."<sup>79</sup>

Given the fact that the basic concepts are taken from what must lie at the basis of every experience, there is no reason, he contends, to make

74. JW II, 257f.: "Die Seele, um eine *Vorstellung* von sich zu haben, müßte sich von sich selbst unterscheiden, *sich selbst äußerlich werden können*. Von dem, was Leben ist, haben wir gewiß das innigste Bewußtsein; aber wer kann sich vom Leben eine Vorstellung machen?" Cf. also JW II, 232f., and *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 143f. (JW IV/1, 194f.).

75. JW II, 208–13; in Jacobi's account substances are characterized in terms of the integral individuality of organic entities in contrast to artificial ones and the spatial resistance, implying cause and effect, is the source of succession and time (as the representation of the successive). Jacobi returns to the theme of the unity of organic substances (in which the whole must be thought in some sense prior to the parts) in making the case for realism as he elaborates the meaning of the Leibnizian monads and innate ideas; see JW II, 251–62.

76. JW II, 214.

77. *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, 142: "Ein unmittelbarer Begriff, in, und für sich allein betrachtet, ist ohne Vorstellung." The later edition is emended, cf. IV/1, 193: "Ein unmittelbarer Begriff, in, und für sich betrachtet, ist ohne Vorstellung—ist ein Gefühl."

78. JW II, 214: "Dergleichen Begriffe aber, die *in jeder Erfahrung* eben vollständig, und dergestalt *als das Erste* gegeben seyn müssen, daß ohne ihr Objectives kein Gegenstand eines Begriffes; und ohne ihren Begriff, überhaupt keine Erkenntniß möglich ware: dergleichen Begriffe hat man von je her schlechterdings allgemeine oder nothwendige Begriffe; und die aus ihnen entspringenden Urtheile und Schlüsse, *Erkenntnisse a priori* genannt." See also JW II, 261: "Diese Begriffe unterscheiden sich von allen übrigen Begriffen dadurch, daß ihre Gegenstände unmittelbar und in allen Dingen *vollkommen* und auf *gleiche Weise* gegeben sind."

79. JW II, 214; later in the dialogue Jacobi distinguishes a priori concepts and comparative concepts from immediate perception or reason (see JW II, 268); charitably interpreted, the basic concepts would be equivalent to the immediate perception or reason.

them into mere prejudices of the understanding, indeed, least of all, prejudices that we have to be cured of, by learning that they do not apply to things in themselves and, hence, have no genuinely objective significance. In this obvious swipe at Kant, Jacobi adds that the derivation of basic concepts from the “essence and community of individual things in general” provides those concepts with a higher degree of universality than can ever be attributed to the prejudices of an all too parochial human understanding.<sup>80</sup> From this vantage point, he advises, it is not his epistemology but the system of transcendental idealism that is ultimately guilty of teaching “a blind faith.”

A system which uproots all claims to knowledge of the truth and, for the most important objects, leaves only such a *blind* faith, utterly devoid of knowledge, the sort never imputed to human beings until now. The renown of putting an end to all doubt in this way is like the renown of the dead relative to the hardship associated with being alive.<sup>81</sup>

Adding insult to injury, Jacobi counsels his interlocutor not to be too hard on the system of transcendental idealism since it will scarcely have any devotees if it is properly understood!<sup>82</sup>

These dismissive remarks, made a little over halfway through the dialogue, by no means signal the end of Jacobi's preoccupation with the system of transcendental idealism. Jacobi casts the remainder of the dialogue as the elaboration of what he approvingly regards as the necessary task of a critique of pure reason.<sup>83</sup> The elaboration provides Jacobi with the opportunity to argue for an organic view of reason, basically inspired, he acknowledges, by Leibniz.<sup>84</sup> The result is an unmistakably positive and rationalist, indeed, in some respects, even classical account of reason.<sup>85</sup>

80. JW II, 215.

81. JW II, 217: “Ein System, welches alle Ansprüche an Erkenntniß der Wahrheit bis auf den Grund ausrottet, und für die wichtigsten Gegenstände nur einen solchen *blinden* ganz und gar Erkenntnißleeren Glauben übrig läßt, wie man den Menschen bisher noch keinen zugemuthet hat. Der Ruhm, all Zweiflerley auf diese Art eine Ende zu machen, ist wie der Ruhm des Todes in Beziehung auf das mit dem Leben verknüpfte Ungemach.”

82. JW II, 217f.

83. JW II, 218–21. It should be noted that, at this juncture in the second edition of the dialogue (JW II, 221n), Jacobi warns his readers of his failure to make the distinction between reason and understanding, a distinction on which he insists in his later philosophy; see the *Vorrede, zugleich Einleitung in des Verfassers sämtliche philosophische Schriften*, JW II, 7–10.

84. JW II, 222: “Was mich betrifft, so halte ich das Princip der Vernunft mit dem Princip des Lebens für einerley, und glaube an gar keine *innerliche oder absolute* Unvernunft.” For Jacobi's acknowledged debt to Leibniz's view of reason, see JW II, 221–24; 238–42; 263f.; see, however, also JW II, 248–50, for his qualification regarding the interpretation of Leibniz.

85. Hence, it is difficult to accept without qualification di Giovanni's contention that



The view of reason expounded in the latter part of the dialogue is, accordingly, as much metaphysical as epistemological. It is grounded in the view that the only genuinely actual things in nature are individual living entities, formal unities of material manifolds pervading each other and becoming one.<sup>86</sup> The precise nature of this formal unity corresponds to a degree of life or, what is the same, a degree of distinctness of consciousness. Reason, according to Jacobi, is just such a formal unity at the higher levels of life and consciousness.<sup>87</sup> Hence, it must be understood organically, in terms of its involvement with other entities and its own activity of constituting the unity of a distinct living thing.

Reason (or, equivalently, at this stage in his thinking, the "intellect" or "understanding") is accordingly portrayed by Jacobi, on the one hand, as continuous with the senses, a fact he finds neatly captured and corroborated by such colloquial metaphorical expressions as "common sense" or "good sense."<sup>88</sup> "What we call 'sense,'" he insists, "is nothing other than the manner of the relation of one substance to others in the great universe."<sup>89</sup> Reason is an enhanced power of the senses, capable of taking in and retaining multiple impressions so perfectly that they are echoed in consciousness through language.<sup>90</sup> Yet, however much an individual living thing may be determined by things outside it, it must also be able to be determined by the laws of its own nature alone. "The objects that we perceive," he observes, "cannot produce our *perceiving itself*, that is, the inner action of sensing, representing, and thinking," in short, reason, the power of thinking within us.<sup>91</sup>

Reason is, then, on Jacobi's account, a higher degree of life or consciousness precisely by virtue of being able to be involved with and en-

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Jacobi at this time had given the term "reason" "a pejorative meaning"; see di Giovanni, 19; in di Giovanni's defense, see JW IV/1, 243f. and 214; see, however, di Giovanni, 93f. and 99; on these pages he recounts Jacobi's positive view of reason as a higher form of sensitivity, indeed, in contrast to Kant; he also observes (*ibid.*, 43 and 85) that Jacobi "to the end . . . remained a rationalist" and "had not shied away from claiming that 'faith' is the matrix of reason."

86. JW II, 258f., 261.

87. JW II, 262f.

88. Cf. JW II, 270: "Die reinste und reichste Empfindung hat die reinste und reichste Vernunft zur Folge." JW II, 226: "Man hat nie mehr Verstand als man Sinn hat." JW II, 227: "Unsinn, als der äußerste Mangel des Verstandes, steht dem Sinne entgegen." Cf. also JW II, 285. It may be helpful to keep in mind that, for Baumgarten, who through Kant often set the terminology for the subsequent generation, the term "*Verstand*" is a translation of the Latin "*intellectus*" and, accordingly, may stand for the understanding as well as for the intellect as a whole.

89. JW II, 240: "Jede einzelne Form wird durch die Form des Ganzen bestimmt, was wir Sinn nenne, ist nichts anders, als die Art des Verhältnisses einer Substanz zur andern im großen All."

90. JW II, 263; 270f.

91. JW II, 244-45; 271f.



tain a great many other things and yet to maintain itself in the face of them. Like life in general, reason can itself be gradated according to the degree of the rational entity's capacity to distinguish itself, extensively and intensively, from other things.<sup>92</sup> In a loose sense, "pure reason" may be said to stand simply for "a power, consisting in itself, working forth out of itself alone" that is ultimately indistinguishable from the spontaneous consciousness of animals.<sup>93</sup> However, reason is, more precisely, the power that allows rational entities to maintain and distinguish themselves from others. Human reason is the capacity of the human soul to elevate itself in concepts above its individual sensations and perceptions and to determine itself, namely, what it does and leaves undone, according to ideas of law.<sup>94</sup> Since God distinguishes himself from all things in the most perfect way, God alone must possess "a completely pure reason."<sup>95</sup> The final pages of the dialogue amplify this idea as Jacobi rehearses, in the face of certain objections, his argument for the existence of God as a creator, based on the organization of things.<sup>96</sup>

From the foregoing it should be obvious that Jacobi's entire dialogue represents a protracted *Auseinandersetzung* with Kant's critical philosophy, centered around the proper interpretation of reason. Given this fact, the criticism in the appendix should not be read as a mere appendage to the dialogue. Indeed, Jacobi's manner of settling accounts, in the appendix, with the doctrine of the unknowability of the thing in itself is integrally related to the argument in the dialogue. Jacobi initially addresses his criticism in the appendix not to Kant but rather to "some promoters of the Kantian philosophy" who are so afraid of the charge of idealism that they are willing to countenance some misunderstanding of the critical philosophy. The same, Jacobi observes, cannot be said of Kant and, as evidence of Kant's forthrightness, he cites Kant's affirmation of the transcendental ideality of space (A 370, 372f., 374–375n) and time (A 36f.) and his declarations that "objects are nothing but ap-

92. JW II, 264.

93. JW II, 220.

94. JW II, 278.

95. JW II, 264.

96. JW II, 274–77. At issue here is the problem of believing *x* because *x* is incapable of proof or because *x* is self-evident; cf. di Giovanni, 91: "In the first case the assent must be based on subjective factors that compensate for the lack of objective evidence from which the presumed truth suffers. In the second, truth provides its own objective 'evidence,' so compelling that it elicits immediate subjective assent. But by any common standard, assent informed by compelling objective evidence constitutes basic knowledge. Unless, therefore, one wants to restrict objective evidence to the product of ratiocination, which Jacobi definitely did not, by defining faith as he did Jacobi denied himself the possibility of drawing in any unequivocal fashion the distinction just made. The result was that he could not avoid conveying the impression that, so far as he was concerned, all our presumed knowledge is in fact ultimately dependent on subjective grounds for assent rather than on objective evidence, i.e. that it normally depends on faith as normally understood. But this was precisely the skeptical position he wanted to oppose."

pearances, that is, mere representations and . . . outside of our thoughts, have no existence grounded in themselves" (A 491) and that "appearances are not things in themselves, but rather the mere play of our representations" (A 101, 126).

These passages suffice, Jacobi submits, to demonstrate that the Kantian philosopher violates the spirit of Kant's system if he maintains that objects make impressions on the senses, impressions that awaken sensations and in this way bring about representations. For, according to the Kantian doctrine, the empirical object cannot be present "outside" us (i.e., in a way inaccessible to our epistemic capabilities) and the transcendental object is completely unknown to us. Moreover, Jacobi adds, Kant never speaks of the latter when objects come up for consideration. "His concept is at most a problematic concept, which rests upon the utterly subjective form of our thinking, a form belonging solely to our peculiar sentience."<sup>97</sup> The concept of the object is in no way given by experience or appearances, but instead is supplied to appearances by the synthetic activity of the intellect. We know the object to the extent that we have brought some synthetic unity to the manifold of intuition, but this synthetic unity is not the transcendental object. The latter remains utterly unknown and "it is only assumed as intelligible cause of appearance in general merely so that we have something that may correspond to sentience as a receptivity."<sup>98</sup>

In this way Jacobi makes it clear that any presupposition to the effect that representations are the result of the impressions made upon the senses by objects violates the spirit of the Kantian philosophy. At the same time, however, Jacobi confesses that he sees no way into the Kantian system without such a presupposition. What else can the word

97. JW II, 302: "... sein Begriff ist höchstens ein problematischer Begriff, welcher auf der ganz subjectiven, unserer eigentümlichen Sinnlichkeit allein zugehörigen Form unseres Denken beruht; ..." Jacobi probably has the following two passages (cited at JW II, 303n) in mind here, A254: "Ich nenne einen Begriff problematisch, der keinen Widerspruch enthält, der auch als eine Begrenzung gegebener Begriffe mit anderen Erkenntnissen zusammenhängt, dessen objektive Realität aber auf keine Weise erkannt werden kann" and A 253f.: "Lasse ich aber hingegen all Anschauung weg, so bleibt doch noch die Form des Denkens, d.i. die Art, dem Mannigfaltigen einer möglichen Anschauung einen Gegenstand zu bestimmen."

98. JW II, 303: "... er [der transcendente Gegenstand] wird als intelligibele Ursache der Erscheinung überhaupt nur angenommen, blos damit wir etwas haben, was der Sinnlichkeit als einer Receptivität correspondire." Jacobi probably has A494 (cited in II, 303n) in support of this interpretation: "Die nichtsinnliche Ursache dieser Vorstellung ist uns gänzlich unbekannt, und diese können wir daher nicht als Objekt anschauen; ... Indessen können wir die bloß intelligible Ursache der Erscheinungen überhaupt, das transcendente Object nennen, bloß, damit wir etwas haben, was der Sinnlichkeit als einer Receptivität korrespondiert." It is worth noting that all the passages cited by Jacobi in support of his interpretation—see II, 303n—were rewritten by Kant in the second edition of the *KrV*.

“sentience” [*Sinnlichkeit*] mean, he asks, if not “a distinct, real medium” between two real things, “an actual means from something to something?”<sup>99</sup> Does not the passivity that Kant himself attributes to sentience constitute only half of a condition, unthinkable without the other, active half and prior to the activity of the understanding? Relying upon his realist account of the coincidence of sense and the basic concepts of reason in the dialogue, he argues further that the term “sentience” is devoid of meaning if it is not understood to contain concepts of union and disunion, action and passion, causality and dependence “as real and objective determinations.”<sup>100</sup>

Yet it is equally obvious, Jacobi continues, that it is impossible to remain in Kant’s system if it is in any way presupposed that we perceive or understand objects outside us as things in themselves. Even if, according to the Kantian philosophy, it can be assumed that some “transcendental something” might correspond to appearances, the nature of that correspondence remains utterly beyond human ken.<sup>101</sup> The source of the sensation or the way in which we are affected by objects remains unknown, while the way that the sensations are formed and become objects for us is traced to a spontaneity of our nature, first expressed in the blind, synthesizing capacity of the imagination. The results are concepts and principles that enjoy a “relative truth” or “relatively objective validity,” that is to say, a validity relative to the constitution of our nature.<sup>102</sup>

The aim of Jacobi’s appendix to his dialogue is to show both the necessity and the impossibility of a certain realist presupposition in transcendental idealism. That realist presupposition is the acknowledgment that, in the transcendental understanding, objects are present outside us and related to us, such that we could be in a position to perceive them in some way.<sup>103</sup> The irreconcilability of such a presupposition with transcendental idealism has, Jacobi submits, dire consequences. As long as such a presupposition is not countenanced, the transcendental idealist has no recourse but to maintain “the most powerful idealism that has ever been taught.”<sup>104</sup>

The issues raised by Jacobi’s presentation of transcendental idealism and his critique of Kant’s concept of the thing in itself have been a traditional source of controversy. In Jacobi’s defense, there are texts, especially where Kant is introducing his readers to transcendental idealism, where Kant plainly identifies the thing in itself as the cause of sensa-

99. JW II, 303.

100. JW II, 303–4; 308–9.

101. All objects of experience remain mere appearances, “the real content of which is, through and through, nothing other than our own sensation”; see JW II, 305.

102. JW II, 306–8.

103. JW II, 309.

104. JW II, 310.

tions and as something real. The obvious problem with this identification is the fact that, given the constraints that Kant places on the use of categories such as causality and reality, he cannot legitimately describe the thing in itself, lying as it does beyond any possible experience, as a “cause” or something “real.” Insofar as empirical objects can make impressions upon the senses, they are part of the cause of the sensations and thus the intuitions that we have. As part of such causes, they can be objects of physical and psychological research, though at any given stage of that research a limit is reached. Of course, what lies beyond that limit can still be conceived, though the concept in such a case is only a limiting one, the mere thought of a thing in itself, but not the metaphysical claim that the thing in itself is real or the cause of what appears.

Certain aspects of Jacobi’s account of transcendental idealism are misleading. Contrary to what Jacobi seems at times to presume, Kant is concerned with elaborating, not the constitution of empirical objects as such, but the constitution of the a priori conditions of objectivity, that is to say, the objectivity of empirical objects or, better, what would count as the objectivity of any sort of empirical object. That objectivity, moreover, is dependent upon the spontaneous and not the reflective synthetic activity of self-consciousness. Finally, that spontaneous, synthetic activity is, while necessary, hardly sufficient to produce the appearances of the empirical objects. In Jacobi’s critique he collapses the spontaneous and the reflective activities of self-consciousness and wrongly imputes to Kant the view that the spontaneous activity of self-consciousness is supposed to suffice to produce the appearances of empirical objects.

In addition, Jacobi’s insistence that sentience be understood as “a distinct real medium between one real thing and another” is not denied by Kant’s transcendental idealism. Indeed, if anything, transcendental idealism is bent on securing the claims of common sense realism, even Jacobi’s eclectic hybrid of common sense and rationalist realism, in the face of Hume’s skepticism. Accomplishing this task, moreover, is something that, as far as Kant is concerned, neither the common sense philosopher nor the rationalist philosopher had managed to do satisfactorily.

Nevertheless, despite such infidelities and infelicities in Jacobi’s characterization of transcendental idealism, the general thrust of his critique of Kant’s concept of the thing in itself exposes a fundamental and, it seems, intractable problem at the core of Kant’s philosophy.<sup>105</sup> In short,

105. Rae Langton argues that there is a way out of the dilemma, if we recognize (a) that things may have intrinsic and relational (including causal) properties and (b) that we lack knowledge only of the former. See Rae Langton, *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). This argument is promising as an interpretation of one side of Kant, demonstrating him to be, at least in certain respects, a realist with humility about human epistemic powers, even if the interpretation also drama-

how can Kant's concept of an unknowable thing in itself be squared with the uses to which he puts it in his philosophy and, especially, with his avowed idealism? It would be shortsighted, however, to view Jacobi's critique as merely a demonstration of an inconsistency in Kant's philosophy. For it also reveals that Kant's philosophy supposes, without being able to ground rationally, an abiding faith in the rationality of things.<sup>106</sup> From this vantage point, perhaps the principal merit of Jacobi's critique of Kant's transcendental idealism consists in its exposure of Kant's continuing commitment to a rationalist and thus, in a sense, even dogmatic conception of a timeless, historically and emotionally disconnected reason. What renders Kant's conception disturbingly dogmatic, from Jacobi's point of view, is Kant's unargued or at least insufficiently argued presumption that reason is capable of arriving at rational belief on its own, indeed, a belief in a "living God," as though that belief were not of a piece with the tradition or even with the human being's life in nature.

At an epistemologically more primitive level, what controls the dispute between Kant and Jacobi are competing conceptions of consciousness, concepts, and reason. For Kant as well as for Jacobi reason and consciousness are limited and, yet, within their limitations, self-sufficient. The crucial difference is that reason, as Kant conceives it, is self-sufficient because it is occupied solely with concepts and all concepts are representational. For Jacobi, on the other hand, there are and, indeed, must be pre-representational concepts, ultimately equivalent to feelings, but with a realist and historical import that confounds not only idealism and its skeptical excesses but, more broadly, the very project of enlightenment in modernity.

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tizes the gulf between this realism and Kant's idealism (a point of which Langton is well aware; cf. *ibid.*, 46f., 205–18). Yet it is difficult to see how, Kant-exegesis aside, Jacobi's critique does not remain trenchant even for such a sympathetic reconstruction. For the problem remains of accounting for the intrinsic, yet unknown properties or in what sense we can say that things possess them at all if we remain, indeed, ignorant of things in this sense. I am grateful to one of my anonymous reviewers for calling my attention to Langton's work in this connection.

106. Here the critique of the thing in itself dovetails with Jacobi's insistence, noted earlier, on the necessity of conceiving reason developmentally and organically, in continuity with the senses and sentient life. Hence, he takes Kant to task for presupposing but not explaining the harmony of sentience and understanding; see Manfred Baum, *Deduktion und Beweis in Kants Transzendentalphilosophie: Untersuchungen zur "Kritik der reinen Vernunft"* (Königstein: Hain bei Athenäum, 1986), 210: "Die Möglichkeit der Erfahrung, die allen Erkenntnissen a priori (Raum und Zeit, Kategorien, Grundsätze) objektive Realität gibt, ist also insofern zwar nichts Empirisches, als sie eine Bedingung *aller* Erfahrung ist und a priori (als Bedingung des empirischen Selbstbewußtseins) eingesehen werden kann. Die Harmonie von Sinnlichkeit und Verstand aber, auf der die Möglichkeit der Erfahrung selbst beruht, ist gleichwohl etwas Zufälliges."

## Chapter 5

### THE LEGACY OF AESTHETIC HOLISM Hamann, Herder, and Schiller

Johann Georg Hamann (1730–88), Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), and Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) are among a handful of thinkers most responsible for creating a legacy of holistic thinking in Germany in the second half of the eighteenth century. If this era is generally associated with the end of the Enlightenment, the writings of Hamann, Herder, and Schiller represent the German “Counter-Enlightenment,” dedicated to the premise that the genuine meanings of things derive from their interactive functions in a dynamic, self-determining whole, albeit one that humans succeed in grasping merely in a fragmentary way. Hamann and Herder, both sons of Prussian pietists, are also known to historians of German culture as prime movers of the so-called “Storm and Stress” (*Sturm und Drang*) movement epitomized in the theater—its art form of choice—and later emulated by the Swabian Schiller’s early plays *The Robbers* (1781) and *The Conspiracy of Fiesco in Genoa* (1783).<sup>1</sup> This

1. The decade of the 1770s marks the heyday of the *Sturm und Drang* movement, which is also marked by the appearance in 1774 of the drama *Götz von Berlichingen* and the novel *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* by Goethe, Herder’s close friend at the time. The expression *Sturm und Drang* derives from the title of a 1776 play by Friedrich Maximilian Klingler, one of the more successful playwrights of the movement. Other writers representative of this movement include Gottfried August Bürger, Heinrich Wilhelm von Gerstenberg, Johann Jakob Wilhelm Heinse, and Jakob Michael Reinhold Lenz. On the connection between pietism and the *Sturm und Drang* movement, see Michael Mann, *Sturm-und-Drang-Drama: Studien und Vorstudien zu Schillers Räubern* (Berne/Munich: Francke, 1974), 42–47. In Hegel’s view, these early plays are marked by “an immaturity, even a crudeness and barbarity that can be shocking”; see Hegel, *Werke*, XIII, 47, 383f.; also *ibid.*, XV, 577ff. The primary sources used in this essay include J. G. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. J. Nadler, 6 vols. (Vienna: Herder, 1949–57); *Hamanns Schriften*, ed. Friedrich Roth, 7 vols. (Berlin: Riemer, 1821–25), vol. 8, ed. G. A. Wiedener (Berlin: Riemer, 1842f.); *Briefwechsel*, ed. W. Ziesemer and A. Henkel, 6 vols. (Wiesbaden: Insel, 1955–75); *Hamanns Briefwechsel mit F. H. Jacobi*, ed. C. H. Gildemeister (Gotha: Perthes, 1868); J. G. Herder, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. B. Suphan, 32 vols. (Berlin: Wiedmannsche Buchhandlung, 1877–1913); F. Schiller, *Werke, Nationalausgabe*, ed. Benno von Wiese et al., 43 vols. (Weimar: Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, 1962) (here-

highly self-reflective movement thrives from an identity crisis that is both national and philosophical, as the effort to establish a distinctively German literature in the face of France's cultural hegemony coincides with the question of the nature of reason itself.<sup>2</sup> Not surprisingly, the work of all three thinkers feeds off sustained polemic with the likes of Rousseau, Kant, Mendelssohn, and members of the Berlin Academy reconstituted by Frederick the Great.<sup>3</sup> As in any battle, the adversaries meet on some common ground. Yet Hamann, Herder, and Schiller set themselves apart by their insistence on understanding human nature holistically and thereby dismantling walls erected between reason, on the one side, and language, history, or nature (including humans' sensuous nature) on the other. In keeping with this insistence and perhaps, too, with their own humble origins, all three thinkers sharply criticize what they regard as an oppressive and autocratic state machinery, its alienating social arrangements, its impoverishing economic structure, and the bad faith of its defenders.<sup>4</sup> Far from being opponents of reason, they share a commitment to a reason sufficiently robust and self-conscious to embrace and promote the spontaneity, individuality, and geniality of human life in all its different historical, linguistic, and cultural expressions.<sup>5</sup>

It would be wrong, however, to portray the thinking of these three men with a single brushstroke. Hamann is, after all, fifteen years older than Herder and almost thirty years older than Schiller. Yet even if age differences are set aside, no one would mistake any pair of them for twins. Despite Hamann's lifelong friendship with Herder and their common antipathy toward contemporaries' idolizing of reason, Ha-

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after, Nationalausgabe), and *Essays*, trans. and ed. Walter Hinderer and D. O. Dahlstrom (New York: Continuum, 1995).

2. Cf. Schiller, Nationalausgabe XX, 99: "... [W]enn wir es erlebten, eine Nationalbühne zu haben, so würden wir auch eine Nation." See F. J. Lampert, *German Classical Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 36: "The dramatic theory of Storm and Stress ... is from the start a self-conscious drama, even, as has been argued, a drama of self-consciousness." See, too, Benjamin Bennett, *Modern Drama and German Classicism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1979).

3. Nor is Frederick himself spared; see Hamann's *Au Salomon de Prusse* (1772) in *Sämtliche Werke* III, 57ff. On Frederick the Great and the Academy, see Lewis White Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and His Predecessors* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), 308–16. Beck examines Hamann's critique of the Enlightenment and Herder's theology and philosophy of history in chapter 5: "The Counter-Enlightenment"; see *ibid.*, 374–92.

4. For the social and historical background of such criticisms, see Reinhart Koselleck, who maintains that they were made possible by the divorce of politics and morality, occasioned by religious wars, and Jürgen Habermas, who regards them as preparing the ground for a burgeoning middle class; Reinhart Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1976), 85, and Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1962), 68.

5. See the comprehensive bibliographies in Fritz Blanke and Karlfried Gründer, *Johann Georg Hamanns Hauptschriften Erklärt*, vols. I–II, IV–V, VII (Gütersloh: Mohn, 1956–63).



mann is unsparing in his criticism of the humanist tendencies informing Herder's studies of language.<sup>6</sup> So, too, despite occasional collaborations, Herder and Schiller essentially part ways midway through the 1790s. While an insistence on understanding human beings as living wholes and a deep appreciation of culture's transforming potential are common to the two former medical students turned historians, it is not easy to square Herder's sense of providential heterogeneity with Schiller's vision of an ideal apotheosis of ancient naiveté and modern sentimentality.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, though Schiller's objections to Kant's views of reason and aesthetics echo Hamann's criticisms, Schiller does not share Hamann's intensely ironic and deliberately enigmatic religiosity.<sup>8</sup> At the

6. Herder's fear of anthropomorphism, one of the bases of his critique of the divine origin of language, is immediately challenged by the line "I believe, therefore I spoke" (2 Cor 4:13), cited on the title page of Hamann's *The Last Will and Testament of the Knight of the Rose-Cross on the divine and human origin of language*; cf. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, III, 25; also *ibid.*, 18. Hamann's *Versuch über eine akademische Frage* (1760) was written in response to the prize-winning essay by Michaelis on language for the contest staged by the Academy in the wake of the bitter debate between Maupertuis (language is a tool invented by human beings) and Süßmilch (since language is perfectly orderly and rational, it must have been created by a rational being and given to human beings); see Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, III, 119–26. A decade later Herder composes a prize-winning essay for a similar contest held by the Academy. From 1770 to 1772 Hamann writes several reviews of Herder's essay: *Zwo Recensionen nebst einer Beylage, betreffend den Ursprung der Sprache, Des Ritters von Rosencreuz letzte Willensmeynung über den göttlichen und menschlichen Ursprung der Sprache*, and the unpublished *Philologische Einfälle und Zweifel über eine akademische Preisschrift* (see Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, III, 13–53). On the differences between Herder and Hamann, see Hegel, *Werke*, XI, 311f.; Beck, *Early German Philosophy*, 384.

7. Criticizing Schiller's classification of naive and sentimental poets, Herder prefers "to leave each flower in its own context and from here to study it from its roots to its top just as it is, in reference to its own time and nature" (Herder, *Sämtliche Werke*, XVIII, 138). Herder and Schiller became acquainted with one another in Weimar and in 1787 discussed their common interest in the concept of nemesis or *Andrastea*, though this common interest did not sustain their relationship, particularly in the last decade or so of their lives. The differences in their views of this topic are instructive: for Herder nemesis harmonizes as the personification of the equalizing of extremes, the balance of justice (an image of nemesis), continuous in nature and history; for Schiller it does not but instead has inhuman, ironic features. As Schiller gets older, he becomes increasingly skeptical of progress. On the significance of the image of nemesis for Herder, see Wolfgang Düsing, "Der Nemesisbegriff bei Herder und Schiller," *Herder und die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, ed. Marion Heinz (Amsterdam/Atlanta, Ga.: Rodopi, 1997), 244: "Herders Spezialstudien in der *Andrastea*, z. B. über historische Gestalten des 18. Jahrhunderts, sollen eine Universalgeschichte der Menschheit vorbereiten. Aber das letzte Ziel und der 'höchste Entwurf'—wie er es nennt—'wäre der Entwurf der Nemesis selbst'. Das hieße, im Auf und Ab der Geschichte den Sieg von 'Recht' und 'Wahrheit' herauszuarbeiten. Das immer wieder diskutierte Problem, daß Herders Historismus in einen Relativismus münde, der wiederum nicht mit seinen theologischen Voraussetzungen zu vereinbaren sei, erweist sich hier durch die Nemesiskonzeption als gegenstandslos."

8. Isaiah Berlin claims that Hamann's "doctrine of the need for total self-expression as the object of natural human craving for freedom" gave rise to Schiller's "liberation . . . from the despotism—moral as well as aesthetic—of the laws of fanatical eighteenth century rationalism"; cf. I. Berlin, *The Magus of the North: J. G. Hamann and the Origins of Modern*



same time neither Hamann nor Schiller seems to have harbored anything like Herder's theoretical ambitions and pretensions.

Despite such differences, each member of this trio shares a common preoccupation that is the catalyst of their holism: aesthetics. Each regards art and literature (developing in continuity with language itself) as ways that individuals and societies jointly express and define themselves as wholes across the divide of nature and history. These self-expressions are objective yet finite. They are objective in the sense that they are not reducible to some sphere of the subject (for example, *mens auctoris*, critic, or the play of faculties inhering in some transcendental subject), which our three thinkers all take to be inevitably part of some larger whole. They are finite in the sense that they rely upon metaphor and analogy, with no pretensions to some unlimited perspective. In other words, aesthetic holism is an intrinsically fragmentary holism. The aim of the present paper is to sketch some of the principal contributions made by Hamann, Herder, and Schiller to the legacy of what is here called "aesthetic holism" and to do so with an eye to its import for the emergence of German idealism. If Kant construes his critical philosophy as a synthesis of empiricism and rationalism and as the next logical step for reason beyond dogmatism and skepticism, then the philosophies of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel can be fairly deemed attempts to reconcile Kantian claims for the autonomy of thought (theoretical understanding and moral reason) with the aesthetic insights of Hamann, Herder, and Schiller into thought's natural and historical continuity with life.

Characterization of this triumvirate as authors of an "aesthetic holism" in the second half of the eighteenth century must, however, be qualified. Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*, published in 1750, might well be considered something of a subversive work, judging from the amount of print the author devotes to this science of so-called "inferior" faculties of cognition (namely, the sensory) and their perfection (namely, beauty) in contrast to the study of the "superior" faculties.<sup>9</sup> Yet even if Baumgarten's work is subversive in the sense suggested, the aesthetics of Hamann, Herder, and Schiller are even more so, since they undo the very economy of faculties divided into superior and inferior. Subverting that economy is, of course, not the same as inverting it, a move clearly

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*Irrationalism*, ed. Henry Hardy (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993), 66f., 105. For other similarities, see Terence J. Gorman, *Hamann on Language and Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 17f.

9. This observation is based upon not only Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*, but his *Metaphysica* as well, especially inasmuch as the fifty pages devoted to the "inferior" faculties as well as the twelve pages devoted to the "superior" faculties (*intellectus* and *ratio*) are to be found in what he deems empirical psychology; see Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Metaphysica*, 8th ed. (Halle and Magdeburg: Hemmerde, 1779), III, chap. 1, 179–241.

inconsistent with a thoroughgoing holism. Yet herein lies precisely the difficulty presented by the new meaning given by Hamann, Herder, and Schiller to the young science of aesthetics. Because art in their view is continuous with life in all its historical particularity as the real synthesis of experience and thought, they take art's holistic character as the critical paradigm (criterion and goal) of philosophy itself. Holistic considerations, tempered with the humble awareness of the aesthetic finitude of life, override others in matters of knowledge and action. Yet, the truth of this observation—if it be true—is something that, in the final analysis, can be shown but not said or only said indirectly, something that can only be indicated poetically or exemplified in metaphor. This is the challenging legacy of Hamann, Herder, and Schiller to German idealists who share their holistic concerns, their sense of the continuity of human life with nature and reason with history, but remain unwilling to give aesthetics the final word.

## Hamann and the Aesthetics of the Incarnation

"Every *philosophical* contradiction and the whole historical puzzle of our existence, the impenetrable darkness of its *terminus a quo* and its *terminus ad quem*, are resolved and explained by the first and primal message of the Word become flesh."<sup>10</sup> At the center of Hamann's thinking is the Incarnation, not as an event in the past, but as a historical and eschatological revelation in word and body. Little wonder that Herder's reasons for championing the "human" hypothesis of language's origin amount in Hamann's mind to a deist refusal to countenance God's efficacy, not only in nature but even in human linguistic activity.<sup>11</sup> "The *communicatio* of divine and human *idiomatum* is a fundamental law of and the chief key to all our knowledge and the entire visible economy."<sup>12</sup>

The unique but holistic character of God-becoming-Human (*Menschenwerdung*) challenges several distinctions dear to the Enlightenment, between the natural and the supernatural, between nature and history, and between belief, tradition, language, or experience, on one hand,

10. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, III, 192.

11. Hamann criticizes Herder on several levels. While Herder seems to assume that there is some nonanthropomorphic way of thinking about God, Hamann asserts, by contrast, that it is a mark of divine humility that "the lowest and unworthiest" anthropomorphism is "privileged" (Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, III, 18). In Herder's thesis about language's origin Hamann sees a confusion of discovery and creation. If such basic activities as walking have to be taught, Hamann asks, how can we possibly conceive of this same creature inventing language unassisted? See Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke* III, 30f., 37. For a balanced review of Hamann's criticisms, see Frederick Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 135–41.

12. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, III, 27.

and reason on the other. Herein lies the source of Hamann's complaint, echoed by Herder and Schiller, about his contemporaries' pretentious personification of "universal reason," as though it were an actual person or a separate power or faculty (*reine Vernunft*), detached from tradition and use, capable of speaking other than in allegories and telling human beings what to do. "Even if I were as eloquent as Demosthenes," Hamann writes Herder (August 6, 1784), "I would do nothing but repeat one thing three times: reason is language, logos. I gnaw on this bone full of marrow, and will do so until I die."<sup>13</sup> One of Hamann's more influential formulations of this thesis is his *Metacritique of the Purism of Reason*, finished in January of 1784, in which Hamann takes Kant to task for, among other things, his "mystical love of form," expressed in the "mystery" of a pure sensible intuition (space and time as the forms of sensibility), in the "transcendental superstition" of prelinguistic logical principles (the categories as the forms of understanding), and in the onanist synthesis of those forms that Kant deems knowledge. Though Hamann was not satisfied with the work, it was passed around by Herder and Jacobi until its publication in 1800 by Herder's Kantian-minded foes in an effort to expose the alleged plagiarism of Herder's own 1799 *Understanding and Experience: A Metacritique of the Critique of Pure Reason*.<sup>14</sup>

Nor is history, any more than reason, to be understood as something discontinuous with nature. To the contrary, prefiguring Herder's own concentration on nature in the first two parts of his *Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, Hamann declares: "The entire physical nature of man from his conception to his ceasing to be is a type of history,

13. *Briefwechsel*, V, 177.

14. For Hamann's *Metacritique*, see *Sämtliche Werke*, III, 283–89; see, too, *ibid.*, 225; Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, I, 157f.; *Briefwechsel*, VII, 26. Anticipating his criticisms of Kant by a decade is Hamann's polemic against arguments advanced at the time for ridding the German language of apparently superfluous usages of the letter "h" (*Neue Apologie des Buchstaben h* [1773] in Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, III, 89–108). There Hamann rejects the notion that language can or should be sanitized and regulated, eliminating whatever does not fit some conception of rule-governed rationality; see, too, the discussion of the universal philosophical language and the philosopher's stone in Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke* I, 12. Such personification betrays a scarcely veiled idolization of a "holy reason" commanding people "to genuflect in worship before rational inferences" (Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke* III, 218). In this connection see Gwen Griffith Dickson, *Johann Georg Hamann's Relational Metacriticism* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1995), 220: "Hamann thereby avoids the reductionism that someone of his empiricist tendencies might have fallen into in the eighteenth century but does not do so by lapsing into any of a variety of modes, attitudes or techniques of intellectualism." Among those aware of the challenge that Hamann's work represented to a transcendental philosophy is Fichte, who composes his 1794 essay "On the Linguistic Capacity and the Origin of Language" with Hamann in mind. For a translation of Fichte's essay together with a valuable interpretive essay, see Jere Paul Surber, *Language and German Idealism: Fichte's Linguistic Philosophy* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities, 1996). Note that Hamann and Herder reject the notion of one uniform time.

it is in itself a key to the notion of history.”<sup>15</sup> The import of the Incarnation is patent: all philosophical knowing must flow from God the “writer.”<sup>16</sup> Yet, while there is a privileged and indispensable word, God’s “Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire du ciel & de la terre,”<sup>17</sup> the divine word is by no means confined to scripture: “Every phenomenon of nature was a word—the sign, symbol, and pledge of a new, secret, inarticulable, but all the more intimate union, communication, and community of divine energy and ideas.”<sup>18</sup> Reason is once again not left out of this equation, but placed squarely in the context of nature as a theophany: “God, nature, and reason have as intimate a relation to one another as light, the eye, and all that the former reveals to the latter, or like the center, radius, and periphery of any circle, or like author, book, and reader.”<sup>19</sup>

Hamann apparently came to this incarnational perspective through the experience of a kind of conversion in the aftermath of a prodigal episode in London as a young envoy of the family firm of his friend Johann Berens. The exact nature of the experience has been a subject of some puzzled conjecture<sup>20</sup> but no more so than Hamann’s capacity to assimilate Hume’s philosophy into his incarnational perspective. Like Hume, Hamann holds that existence (including our own) and causality are matters of immediate impressions and belief. Impressions and belief are apparently not identical in his view, but they are on a par inasmuch there are no more grounds or reasons for belief than there are for taste and sight.<sup>21</sup> The immediate impressions are God’s way of appearing to us in nature, while beliefs are the stuff of tradition. Accordingly, with his penchant for an earthy metaphor, he observes that “the *stamina* and *menstrua* of our *reason* are properly only *revelation* and *tradition*.”<sup>22</sup> At the same time existence, a matter of sensual and passionate revelation, is always a step ahead of reason: “Our own existence and the existence of all things outside us must be believed and cannot be determined in

15. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, I, 228f.

16. Hamann, *Briefwechsel*, I, 437; *Sämtliche Werke*, I, 5, 8; *Sämtliche Werke*, II, 247; each section of history (Egyptian, Carthaginian, Roman) is special just as each has its own “present fate”; see *Hamanns Schriften*, ed. Friedrich Roth, vol. I, 303f. For a precis of Hamann’s “verbalism,” see Beck, *Early German Philosophy*, 367f.

17. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, II, 294; I, 308.

18. *Ibid.*, III, 32.

19. *Briefwechsel*, V, 272.

20. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 19f. and 331 n. 10f.

21. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, III, 29 (here Hamann describes Hume as “the greatest early thinker of his country and the natural church”); see, too, *Sämtliche Werke*, II, 73f.; *Briefwechsel*, VII, 460; note, however, Hamann’s charge that Hume has no reason to limit his beliefs in the way that he does (*Briefwechsel*, I, 379; *Sämtliche Werke*, III, 28); see, too, Hamann’s criticism of modern (Hume’s?) Epicureanism (*Sämtliche Werke*, II, 208).

22. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, III, 39; as noted earlier, Hamann also uses sexual imagery effectively in parodying Kant’s epistemology as a kind of onanism; see *ibid.*, 287.

any other way.”<sup>23</sup> So, too, Hamann declares: “Do not forget, for the sake of the *cogito*, the noble *sum*,” rejecting in the process any Cartesian and Kantian pretensions to a capacity for self-knowledge—in place of God—as the foundation of understanding.<sup>24</sup>

Hamann’s strategy, it bears emphasizing, is not bent on debunking putatively universal and theoretical claims in favor of just any sort of empirical and practical knowledge. The knowledge privileged is the knowledge that comes with faith to the person with the right disposition, though it is knowledge allegedly available to anyone who will open her mind to the voice of God speaking immediately to her in and through nature. Generalizations are accordingly construed by Hamann in Berkeleyan fashion as fabrications at odds with the particularity and contextuality of experience.<sup>25</sup> The refusal to accept accidental truths of history, physical facts, and political appearances is interpreted as a vain display of human hubris, the very antithesis of the divine humility of the Incarnation. In this same spirit, he assigns emphatic roles to passions and sexuality; as he puts it to Herder: “my coarse imagination has never been able to picture a creative spirit without *genitalia*.”<sup>26</sup> Hume’s influence is once again unmistakable as Hamann insists that passions are like limbs, the source of understanding, and something that philosophy can only guide.<sup>27</sup> Radically anti-dualist most of the time,<sup>28</sup> Hamann regards attempts to differentiate appearances or experience from reality, be it with respect to nature or politics, as a human conceit, an artifact in the service of human designs and, indeed, designs mostly to evade reality and responsibility. In this spirit he construes Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* as part of the metaphysical legacy promising “that universal and infallible *Philosopher’s Stone*, so indispensable for Catholicism and despotism.”<sup>29</sup> Similarly, Mendelssohn’s *Jerusalem: A Plea for the Toleration of the*

23. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, II, 73; see also *Briefwechsel*, VII, 167; “Faith has need of reason just as much as reason needs faith” (*Hamanns Briefwechsel mit F. H. Jacobi*, 504). This text may indicate a departure from Hume; for a good discussion of the epistemic character of faith for Hamann, see Dickson, *Hamann’s Relational Metacriticism*, 72ff.

24. *Briefwechsel*, VI, 230; *Hamanns Briefwechsel mit Jacobi*, ed. C. H. Gildemeister (Gotha: Perthes, 1868), 497; Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, I, 300f.

25. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, III, 190f.; “if data are given, why use ficta?” he asks (*Briefwechsel*, VI, 331) and by ficta he has in mind words, numbers, and systems, “castles in the sky” as he calls them (*Briefwechsel*, V, 265; cf. *Briefwechsel*, VII, 441: “With numbers, as with words, one can do anything one likes.” See also Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, III, 285; *Briefwechsel*, V, 264, on the error of confusing words with things.

26. *Briefwechsel*, II, 415; V, 167.

27. *Briefwechsel*, I, 442; II, 201–8, 162.

28. Cf. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, I, 24; however, he also distinguishes “the invisible nature shared with God” from “the veiled schema of the body” though the latter is the image of “the hidden human being in us” (*Sämtliche Werke*, II, 198).

29. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, III, 284; for Hamann’s view of metaphysics, see *ibid.*, 285, 287.

*Jews*, a plea based upon a distinction between natural and civil orders, is rejected by Hamann as an apostate ruse to neutralize religion.<sup>30</sup>

Hamann's dispositional epistemology, his refusal to separate the claims of thinking from the character of the thinker, is very much in evidence in his initial contribution to the "Storm and Stress" movement, indeed, by some accounts "the first manifesto" of the movement: the *Socratic Memorabilia* of 1759.<sup>31</sup> Hamann attempts to show that Socrates, far from being a precursor of Enlightenment thinking (left or right, religious or secular), represents its very antithesis.<sup>32</sup> With his self-effacing yet ironic humility and consciousness of his ignorance, with his pained acknowledgment of his vices (readily excusable in someone with such an eye for natural beauty, Hamann notes, by way of excusing Socrates's homosexuality), with his humorous exposure of the sophistry among putative experts of his time and, not least, with the *genius of his capacity to believe* an inner voice and his brave indifference to an unjust death sentence, Socrates is, if anything, the forerunner of the Apostle Paul and even Christ himself.<sup>33</sup> (The problem of interpreting Socrates's genius, daimon, and his striking similarities with Jesus is a crucial and recurrent theme in Hegel.)

Considered one of Hamann's most important works, *Aesthetica in nuce* (1762) is a critique of contemporary biblical scholarship for failing to recognize the essentially poetic nature of scripture and interpretation.

30. Rejected, too, in the polemic with Mendelssohn—the substance of *Golgotha und Schleibimini!* (1784)—is the unhistorical and, from Hamann's anti-dualist perspective, quite illogical notion that an intellectual act of assent somehow legitimates the state (Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, III, 300f.); for an English translation, see Stephen Dunning, *The Tongues of Men: Hegel and Hamann on Religious Language and History* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1979). See, too, Berlin's comment that for Hamann "toleration of differences is a denial of their importance" in *The Magus of the North*, 47.

31. For a useful bilingual edition with commentary, see J. C. O'Flaherty, *Hamann's Socratic Memorabilia: A Translation and Commentary* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967). The *Sokratische Denkwürdigkeiten* was a reply to an attempt by two friends—Christoph Berens, Hamann's former employer, and Kant—to win him back to the tenets of the Enlightenment. Despite a favorable review from Mendelssohn, another reviewer labeled Hamann "a mad enthusiast," prompting him to write a sequel, *Wolken* ("Clouds"), an obvious play on Aristophanes's work, in which, in addition to reviewing the negative reviews, he discusses the relation of madness to genius and further emphasizes the centrality of sexuality in cognition; cf. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, II, 85–109; see, too, Dickson, *Hamann's Relational Metacriticism*, 28–75, and Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 24–29.

32. See Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, II, 62–77; for sources for his reading of Socrates, see James C. O'Flaherty, *Johann Georg Hamann* (Boston: Twayne, 1979), 173 n. 2; on the diversity of Hamann's contemporaries claiming Socrates as their forerunner, see *ibid.*, 44.

33. Perhaps Hamann's forerunner as well! See *Hamann's Socratic Memorabilia*, 88ff., and Dickson, *Hamann's Relational Metacriticism*, 32f., 52ff. This sort of substitution of analogous sets of relationships—Socrates/Sophists, Paul/Corinthians, Hamann/Berens and Kant—as a means of determining their common meaning is what Hamann calls his method of "metaschematizing," the presentation of which is a form of ironic indirection (*Sämtliche Werke*, II, 150); see *Sämtliche Werke*, II, 67f., 76f., 81f.; III, 144.



But this poetic character of scripture also has unmistakable implications for both theology and philosophy, implications that Hamann crafts into an argument for the superiority of “the beautiful, creative, imitative spirit” of poetry over philosophy.<sup>34</sup> God himself is “the poet at the beginning of days” (as well as “the thief at the end of days”), as Hamann puts it, undermining in the process any attempt to isolate the sacred from the profane.<sup>35</sup> Grace and revelation are the stuff of scripture and nature. “Every impression of nature on the human being is not only a reminder, but also a pledge of the fundamental truth: who the Lord is. Every countereffect of the human being on the creation is a letter and seal of our share in the divine nature, and that we are of his stock [*Geschlecht*].”<sup>36</sup>

For all the radicalness of Hamann’s incarnational thought and its implications in his mind about the primacy of poetry over philosophy, he conceives poetry in quite traditional terms as a form of mimesis. Senses and passions speak and understand nothing but images; indeed, all the riches of human knowledge and happiness consist in images. God speaks through these images and poets, as God’s imitators of nature, translate these images. Given the poetic character of this incarnational revelation, poets, not philosophers, are the real students of nature. The passion of poetry does not drown “the text of nature like the deluge,” turning “all its beauties and riches into water,” or “make nature blind” in order then miraculously to be guided by her.<sup>37</sup> The poet’s task is not merely to interpret the various parts of nature (that is philosophy’s task) but to imitate them “or—even more audaciously—to bring them to their destiny.”<sup>38</sup> Underlying this subordination of philosophy to poetry is Hamann’s basic conviction that “speaking is translating,” that from the beginnings of humanity “every phenomenon of nature was a word,” a conviction canceling any philosophical pretensions to being able to distinguish rigorously between sign (spirit) and signified (nature).<sup>39</sup> This conviction entails, too, that Hamannian “reason” or under-

34. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, II, 210.

35. *Ibid.*, 206.

36. *Ibid.*, 207.

37. *Ibid.*, 207f., 197ff.; cf. I, 157f.

38. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, II, 199; cf. *ibid.* 199 for Hamann’s actual division of poetic, historical, and philosophical forms of speaking, a division that combines distinctions made by Johann Georg Wachter (kyriological, symbolic or hieroglyphic, and characteristic); on the importance of Hamann’s heralding of art’s importance, see Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 37 and 333 n. 60.

39. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, II, 199; III, 32; I, 308: “the book of nature.” In addition to the already mentioned works by Berlin, Dickson, and O’Flaherty, the principal full-length studies of Hamann in English over the last half of the twentieth century include Walter Lowrie, *J. G. Hamann: An Existentialist* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1950); Ronald Gregor Smith, *J. G. Hamann 1730–1788: A Study in Christian Existence* (New York: Harper, 1960); W. M. Alexander, *Johann Georg Hamann: Philosophy and Faith* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1966); the work by Terence J. Gorman, cited earlier; with their interest in the palpable parallels between Hamann’s religiosity and subsequent exis-

standing is always intersubjective and volitional, that is to say, others are what and how we primarily understand. Even when we understand nature or events, it is always in view of someone's willing them (creating or making them). "The complication of speech is a history, a phenomenon, an ongoing wonder, and a likeness by which God always continues to speak with us."<sup>40</sup>

Hamann's influence on German idealism is formidable but indirect, not merely because of the often ironic play of metaphor that marks the style of his writings but because of their sheer unavailability, a point Hegel himself emphasizes in his 1828 review of Hamann's writings.<sup>41</sup> All the idealists, however, are directly engaged with the work of F. H. Jacobi, who, after Herder, was perhaps the most effective promulgator of

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tentialist thinking, the works of Lowrie and Smith were subsequently criticized for underestimating the rationality of Hamann's arguments. The focus of Alexander and German, like that of most German studies of Hamann prior to 1950, is predominantly theological. While Berlin (whose work was actually undertaken in the 1960s) finds "a unity of thought and outlook" to Hamann's writings, he studies them for what Hamann as "the pioneer of anti-rationalism" was able to see and "humanity has had to pay a heavy price for disregarding"; for Hamann, according to Berlin, fired "the first great shot in the battle of the romantic individualists against rationalism and totalitarianism"; he is the "forgotten source of a movement that in the end engulfed the whole of European culture" and his "hatred and . . . blind irrationalism have fed the stream that has led to social and political irrationalism" (Berlin, *The Magus of the North*, 4, 24f., 71, 121). By contrast, O'Flaherty's excellent survey makes a strong case against labeling Hamann an "irrationalist" (*Johann Georg Hamann*, 168) and the effects of O'Flaherty's argument (prefigured by Hegel) can be discerned in the excellent work of Dickson, though with a decided difference in emphasis. Like the earlier work by Gregor, Dickson's work includes translations and analysis of some central works, but her aim is to clarify the distinctively relational rather than oppositional character of Hamann's thinking as well as his self-critical (hence, "metacritical") approach to criticism. Generally considered to be the two most important studies of Hamann in the first half of this century are Rudolf Unger, *Hamann und die Aufklärung. Studien zur Vorgeschichte des romantischen Geistes im 18. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols. (Jena: Diederichs, 1911; 2nd ed., Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1963), and Erwin Metzke, *J. G. Hamanns Stellung in der Philosophie des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1934). A valuable treatment of Hamann's historical and philosophical significance can also be found in Beiser's fine study.

40. Hamann, *Sämtliche Werke*, I, 220; *Briefwechsel* VI, 127.

41. Hegel says, in fact, that Hamann's writings are style "through and through"; see Hegel, *Werke*, XI, 294f. No consideration of Hamann's influence can fail to take Hegel's extensive review of his works into account ("Hamanns Schriften," *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik* [1828], no. 77/78, 79/80, 107/108, 109/110, 111/112, 113/114; cf. *Werke*, XI, 275–352, 551f.). Note Schelling's use of Hamann in 1807 lectures on philosophy of art and his enthusiasm for the imminent edition of his works. On the unavailability of Hamann's texts, see Sven-Aage Jørgensen, "Hamann und seine Wirkung im Idealismus," in *Idealismus und Aufklärung*, ed. C. Jamme and G. Kurz (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1988), 153–61. Jørgensen stresses the manner in which Hegel distances himself from Hamann (albeit respectfully and appreciatively for the most part), criticizing Hamann's "sophistry" and lack of any foundation for systematic development. As Jørgensen (*ibid.*, 158) puts it: "Hamanns Geschichte ist dramatisch-eschatologisch, Hegels eher episch-organisch." On Hegel's differences with Hamann and their implications, see, too, John McCumber, *The Company of Words: Hegel, Language, and Systematic Philosophy* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 7–18, 290–95.



Hamann's ideas (though both Hegel and Schelling take pains to distinguish Jacobi's thinking from what they take to be the more profound level of Hamann's insights). The spirit of Hamann resonates unmistakably in the young idealists' common dissatisfaction with dogma and the state, the preeminent role that the Tübingen seminarians, Schelling and Hegel, assign to aesthetics, and their refusal to accept Kantian dichotomies, even if in the end they can no more accept Hamann's appeals to belief and metaphor than they can Kant's categories. But the primary conduit of Hamann's ideas for the German idealists is the work of Herder, to whom Hamann himself writes: "Your theme of language, experience, and tradition is my favorite idea, the egg I brood upon . . . my one and all . . . the idea of mankind and its history."<sup>42</sup>

## Herder and the Aesthetics of the Force of History

Herder became an influential Lutheran chaplain, court preacher, and superintendent of schools in Weimar, while Hamann lived out his days as a low-level tax and customs official.<sup>43</sup> Yet the churchman is much more willing to engage the Enlightenment on its own turf and, perhaps for that reason, the foundational role played by the Incarnation in Hamann's thought is replaced by a flexible conception of force (*Kraft*), an amalgam of notions drawn from Shaftesbury, Spinoza, and Leibniz that Herder insists on understanding in terms of analogies between God and humanity, nature and history. "What we know, we know only from analogy, from the creator to us and from us to the creator," he maintains as he attempts to unite psychology and physiology in *On Knowing and Feeling*

42. *Briefwechsel* VI, 127.

43. The standard intellectual biographies of Herder in English (which have the scholarly advantage of disagreeing with one another) are A. Gillies, *Herder* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1945), and Robert T. Clark Jr., *Herder, His Life and Thought* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1955). One of the motives behind Clark's study is to challenge the thesis advanced by Rudolf Haym that Herder is largely elaborating Hamann's insights (and not Rousseau's); see Rudolf Haym, *Herder, nach seinem Leben und seinen Werken dargestellt*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Gaertner, 1877, 1880, and 1885). See, too, Theodor Litt, *Kant und Herder als Deuter der geistigen Welt* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1930) and *Die Befreiung des geschichtlichen Bewußtseins durch J. G. Herder* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1942). For a selection of translations with a useful introduction and bibliography of primary and secondary texts in English as well as German, see Johann Gottfried Herder, *Against Pure Reason: Writings on Religion, Language, and History*, trans., ed., and with an introduction by Marcia Bunge (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). For instructive essays in English on several aspects of Herder's thought, see the collections edited by Wulf Koepke, *Johann Gottfried Herder: Innovation through the Ages* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1982) and *Johann Gottfried Herder: Language, History, and the Enlightenment* (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1990). The relationship of Herder and his thought to that of Schiller, Fichte, and Schelling is canvassed in essays by G. Arnold, S. Dietzsch, W. Düsing, R. Hofman, P. Rohs, and J. Zammito in Marion Heinz's already cited edition, *Herder und die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*.

(1778).<sup>44</sup> Six years later, in the first part of the *Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind*, he claims that all the physiological forces masterfully unpacked by Haller are, at bottom, one and the same force and that the chief purpose behind all the organizations formed by nature on earth is “a certain *analogous sensing and knowing*.”<sup>45</sup> Just as “all substances are sustained by divine force” and all differences in reality are merely different forces,<sup>46</sup> so terms like “‘sensibility’ and ‘instinct,’ ‘imagination’ and ‘reason’ are merely determinations of a single force.”<sup>47</sup> Auspiciously, in his earliest ruminations on art, he reasons that what space is for painting and time for music, force is for poetry.<sup>48</sup>

Yet it is primarily Herder's endeavor to understand the historical working of these forces that sets him apart from his peers and has a particular impact on German idealists. With Herder, Leibniz's *vis viva* enters history and, indeed, does so in all its magnificent, empirical variety. A concern for historical differentiation of linguistic style, coupled

44. Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke*, VIII, 170; see also *ibid.*, IX, 301f. (*Über den Einfluß der schönen in die höheren Wissenschaften*); as with many other notions in Herder, his conception of analogy is articulated by Hamann; cf. Hamann, *Sämmtliche Werke*, II, 206f.: “Diese Analogie des Menschen zum Schöpfer ertheilt allen Kreaturen ihr Gehalt und ihr Gepräge, . . .”

45. Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke*, XIII, 81f., 126f. Parts 1 and 2 of Herder's *Ideas* are panned by Kant precisely for their appeal by way of analogy to a basic force. “This is still metaphysics, and what is more, very dogmatic metaphysics, even though our author renounces it, as fashion demands,” Kant concludes; *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 54; for the English translation, see Immanuel Kant, *On History*, ed. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963), 38. As Beck and others point out, Kant's criticisms are sometimes based upon misrepresentations and even, as Beiser aptly puts it, “his own precritical shadow”; see *On History*, 28 fn. 2, and Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 148–58. On the fact that Kant's critique of teleological judgment owes much to his continuing debate with the position of Herder and his circle, see John Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's “Kritik der Urteilskraft”* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 178–88. In 1762 Herder was Kant's student, but in the course of the next forty years his polemical, at time bitter opponent, a falling out that predated but was nonetheless exacerbated by Kant's reviews of *Ideas*. Nevertheless, in his *Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität* (1795) Herder gives a flattering portrait of Kant the Privatdozent. For the important historical details of Herder's relationship to Kant and his adherents, see the essays by Arnold and Heinz in Heinz (ed.), *Herder und die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, 89 n. 2, 192–98. Heinz notes that Herder's remarks about Kant's theory of transcendental apperception help explain his rejection of the subsequent idealists; see *ibid.*, 100. For those remarks, see Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke*, XXI, 93f., 151f., 182.

46. The quotation is from *God, Some Conversations* (1787); cf. Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke* XVI, 441: “Die Substanzen der Welt werden allesammt von göttlicher Kraft erhalten, wie sie nur durch göttliche Kraft ihr Dasein bekamen; sie bilden also, wenn man will, modificirte Erscheinungen göttlicher Kräfte, jede nach der Stelle, nach der Zeit, nach den Organen, in und mit welchen sie erscheinen.” Cf. also *ibid.*, 541, 566. On Herder's distinctive application of the concept of force (*Kraft*) to history and its appropriation by Hegel, see H. G. Gadamer, “Herder und die geschichtliche Welt,” *Kleine Schriften* III (Tübingen: Mohr, 1972), 110f.

47. Herder, *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, ed. Hans Dietrich Irmscher (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1966), 28, 79; *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, ed. Hans Dietrich Irmscher (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1990), 82.

48. Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke*, III, 137.

with a rejection of universal standards of taste and a plea for a renewal of homegrown German literature, is a hallmark of his thought from the outset. In *Fragments on Recent German Literature* (1766), the work that launches his career, poetic language is said to belong to a youthful stage before merging with prose in adulthood and ultimately giving way to the old age of philosophical prose. But it is precisely the vividness of the poetry's language that demands the closest connection between word and thought, a connection, Herder adds, that can hardly be attained by translation or imitation of other languages.<sup>49</sup> In the *Critical Groves* (1769), after declaring Homer inimitable and "the most successful poetic mind of his century and nation," Herder adds that the basis of Homer's poetic genius is not found "outside his nature or the age that formed him."<sup>50</sup> But neither is genius, for all its dependency upon a distinct historical and linguistic context, fully explicable by that context.<sup>51</sup>

Herder repeatedly sets for himself the gargantuan task of doing justice to the claims of genius and those of tradition as well as other discontinuities and continuities across nature and history. Nor is his pursuit of this goal without conscious and, indeed, aesthetic precedent: Shakespeare.<sup>52</sup> In a seminal essay on the English bard (1773) Herder describes him as the dramatist of a people (*Volk*) that has no desire to ape Greek genius, let alone soulless French imitations of it. Contrasting Sophocles and Shakespeare, Herder observes that, while the Greek remained true to nature by treating one action in one time and place ("all these things lay at that time in *nature*, without which the poet could do nothing"), the Englishman could only do so by unrolling "world-historical events and

49. *Ibid.*, I, 151f., 179, 240, 414f. For a valuable study and translation of Herder's earliest essay, "Über den Fleiß in mehreren gelehrten Sprachen" (1764) as the "seed" to his later thinking, see Michael M. Morton, *Herder and the Poetics of Thought: Unity and Diversity in "On Diligence in Several Learned Languages"* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1989). For a good account of Kant's unfavorable reaction to Herder's early *Sturm und Drang* essays and their conception of genius in particular, see Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's "Kritik der Urteilskraft,"* 32–44.

50. Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke*, III, 202.

51. A similar concern for native genius motivates his ground-breaking publication of *Folk Songs and Songs of Love* in 1778 and his popular defense of the Old Testament from its Enlightenment detractors in *The Spirit of Hebrew Poetry, an Introduction for Lovers of the Same and of the Most Ancient History of the Human Spirit* of 1782–83; on the former, see René Wellek, *The History of Modern Criticism: 1750–1950* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1955), 192–95, and Robert Mayo, *Herder and the Beginnings of Comparative Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969); on the latter see Clark, *Herder, His Life and Thought*, 294f.

52. On Herder's early aesthetics (1763–78), see Robert Norton, *Herder's Aesthetics and the European Enlightenment* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), and Simon Richter, *Laocoon's Body and the Aesthetics of Pain* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), chap. 4, 90–130. A brief but instructive discussion of Herder's hermeneutics can be found in Henrik Birus, ed., *Hermeneutische Positionen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 26ff.

human fates through all the times and places where they happened.”<sup>53</sup> Nevertheless, for all Shakespeare’s dependence upon historical conditions and theatrical traditions, his genius also produced something “new, first, completely different.”<sup>54</sup> What Herder particularly treasures in Shakespeare is his ability to capture characters, families, customs, situations, and the like at a particular time and place—and no other. “When I read him, theater, actor, curtains disappear! Only individual pages from the book of events, providence, the world, blowing in the storm of the times! Individual marks of peoples, classes, souls,” yet “filled with one soul breathing through, animating everything.”<sup>55</sup> The individuals cooperate in the direction of the whole, not in a direct and conceptual way (no cunning of reason), but rather as “obscure, little symbols outlining a theodicy,” grasped by feeling.<sup>56</sup>

The way in which Herder extends his interpretation of Shakespearean drama to history epitomizes his aesthetic holism. There are ample insinuations of that extension in the Shakespeare essay itself, as when he rhapsodizes about Shakespeare: “Here is no poet! Here is the creator! Here is the history of the world!”<sup>57</sup> Eleven years after the Shakespeare essay Herder makes a valiant attempt to transfer this genetic yet also organic conception of art, beginning with its natural basis, to history itself as he devotes the first two parts of his monumental *Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Mankind* (1784–91) to the study of the cosmic, physical, and biological basis of humanity and its presence in diverse cultures, before turning in the final two books to recorded history proper. Placing human beings at the nexus of nature and a spiritual world, he observes: “The principles of this philosophy are as simple and unmistakeable as the fact that it is a natural history of human beings: *tradition and organic forces*.”<sup>58</sup> The roles played by the philosophy of nature in relation to Schelling’s transcendental philosophy and Hegel’s philosophy of spirit

53. Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke*, V, 226; Herder, “Shakespear,” in Herder, Goether, Frisi, Möser, *Von deutscher Art und Kunst: Einige fliegenden Blätter* (1773), ed. Hans Dietrich Irmscher, expanded ed. (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1988), 69; see, too, *ibid.*, 84: “Nimm dieser Pflanze ihren Boden, Saft und Kraft, und pflanze sie in die Luft: nimm diesen Menschen Ort, Zeit, individuelle Bestandtheit—du hast ihm Othem und Seele genommen, und ist ein Bild vom Geschöpf.”

54. Herder, “Shakespear,” 76.

55. *Ibid.*, 78, 79f.

56. *Ibid.*, 78, 80.

57. *Ibid.*, 81; see *ibid.*, 90: “Jedes Stück ist History im weitesten Verstand. . . . *Eräugniß einer Weltbegebenheit, eines Menschlichen Schicksals*.”

58. Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke*, XIII, 347. Owsei Temkin, “German Concepts of Ontogeny and History Around 1800,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 24 (1950): 241n: “Herder’s *Ideen* were the starting point for the whole biological movement around 1800, including not only Kielmeyer but also Goethe, Cuvier, and Pfaff.” In “Neue Epoche der Naturwissenschaft,” Schelling refers to the connection between Kielmeyer and Herder, and Hegel later notes this source of Schelling’s philosophy of nature.

take their cues from the notion of reason that emerges from the *Ideas*, namely, a self-developing reason, a reason developing itself empirically and traditionally.<sup>59</sup>

Herder's *Ideas*, however, is neither his first work on the philosophy of history after his Shakespeare essay, nor arguably the work most consistent with its insights. In *Yet Another Philosophy of History* (1774), Herder describes history as a theater piece in which we are all players in a chain of events that only the divine playwright can oversee.<sup>60</sup> Here the empirical theodicy described in the Shakespeare essay takes shape as Herder attempts to steer a course between progressivism and skepticism, each of which in his view not only neglects the uniqueness of historical individuals and events, but also puts in question divine omnipotence as the ultimate source of meaning. At the same time *Yet Another Philosophy of History* throws down the gauntlet at the Enlightenment: "In Europe there is supposed to be more virtue now than there has ever been in the entire world?"—And why? because there is more *enlightenment* in it—I believe that precisely for that reason there would have to be less."<sup>61</sup> Anticipating Schiller and the young idealists among others, Herder criticizes his own age's infirmity: its alienation of theory from practice and mind from heart, its narcissistic detachment combined with philosophical abstractness, all of which play into the hands of theoretical and political absolutism by rendering uniformity and arbitrary mechanization not only possible but plausible.<sup>62</sup>

A combination of parody and sermon most associated with Herder's "historicism," *Yet Another History* was conceived by him as a prelude to the larger project that became the *Ideas*. Yet, while the *Ideas* occasionally echoes the earlier work in remarks about the completeness of each age in itself and the role played by negation in historical change, it also sets forth a kind of organic progression in which, with temporary exceptions, the later surpasses the earlier. In short, a principle of continuity, an ordered, even teleological development overrides the discontinuities—as it does in Fichte's *The Characteristics of the Present Age*, in Schelling's *System*

59. Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke*, XIII, 145: "Theoretically and practically, reason (*Vernunft*) is nothing else but something heard (*Vernommenes*), a learned proportion and orientation of ideas and forces, to which a human being is educated according to his organization and manner of living." See Fichte, *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre*, in *Fichtes Werke*, ed. I. Fichte (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), 59n: "The doctrine of science is thus absolute totality."

60. Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, 83f.

61. *Ibid.*, 79.

62. *Ibid.*, 60–63; yet, again true to his sense of the continuities in historical reality even amid its discontinuities and anticipating Hegel's talk of a new beginning in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Herder also recognizes a new beginning in the Enlightenment's demise.

of *Transcendental Idealism*, and Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*.<sup>63</sup>

Hamann's criticisms of Herder's prize-winning *Treatise on the Origin of Language* (1772) have already been mentioned, but the treatise warrants separate attention for its holistic view of language. The treatise won the essay contest of the Berlin Academy on the question: "Supposing humans are left to their own natural faculties, are they in a position to invent language?"<sup>64</sup> Herder's aim in the treatise is to give an adequate account of the human origin of human language. But in the process of pursuing this rather straightforward-sounding goal, Herder does more than dispute attempts to locate the origin in God (Süßmilch's thesis) or in the aspects of human nature that are continuous with that of other animals (a thesis purportedly advocated by Rousseau and Condillac). He also impishly and nervously exposes the meaninglessness of the question posed by the Academy, a point not lost on Hamann.<sup>65</sup> For in the course of the *Treatise* Herder rejects key presuppositions of the Academy's question, namely, that human beings and their use of language can be clearly distinguished, that human beings have "natural faculties" that allow them to "invent" language, or even that an explanation can be given at all, if that is to mean looking outside the phenomenon of human language itself for its origin.<sup>66</sup>

63. Herder, *Sämtliche Werke*, XIV, 207: "Ist indessen ein Gott in der Natur: so ist er auch in der Geschichte . . ."; *ibid.*, 213: "Alle zerstörenden Kräfte in der Natur müssen den erhaltenden Kräften mit der Zeitenfolge nicht nur unterliegen, sondern auch selbst zuletzt zur Ausbildung des Ganzen dienen"; see, too, *ibid.*, 235: "Nach Gesetzen ihrer innern Natur muß sich mit der Zeitenfolge auch die Vernunft und Billigkeit unter den Menschen mehr Platz gewinnen und eine daurende Humanität befördern." See also *ibid.*, 204–52. For a historicist reading of Herder, overdetermined by *Yet Another Philosophy of History*, see Isaiah Berlin, *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas* (London: Hogarth, 1976).

64. "En supposant les hommes abandonnés à leurs facultés naturelles, sont-ils en état d'inventer le langage?" cited by Hans Dietrich Irmischer in his afterword to *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1966), 137. This question is only the first of two questions set by the Berlin Academy. For an English translation of the first part of Herder's treatise, corresponding to the first question, see Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Johann Gottfried Herder, *On the Origin of Language*, trans. J. H. Moran and A. Goode (New York: Ungar, 1966).

65. *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, 124; Clark, *Herder, His Life and Thought*, 136: "... the *Treatise* shows a Voltairean or Swiftian gall"; cf. *ibid.* 131f., 136f. "Philosophical nonsense" is Herder's epithet for the isolation of reason as "a new, completely detached power" (*Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, 26f.).

66. *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, 123; Herder's *Concerning Knowing and Feeling* (1774) is yet another essay submitted to the Academy with the express aim of debunking the presuppositions of its question (in this case: what influence do these two main powers of the human mind have on each other?). For useful discussions of Herder's ambiguous adaptation of Haller's physiology onto a Leibnizian framework, see Clark, *Herder, His Life and Thought*, 217–28; Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, 145–49; Richter, *Laocoon's Body*, 95–106.



In regard to the first of these presuppositions, it bears noting that both Süßmilch and Condillac maintain—as Herder does in the *Treatise* and in his critique of Kant some thirty years later—that human language and human reason are equivalent.<sup>67</sup> Yet, despite considerable and largely unacknowledged overlap with the views of his opponents, Herder charges that appeals to God or nature presuppose what is distinctive about human language, without being able to explain that distinctiveness. A considerable controversy has arisen regarding the novelty and the precise meaning of Herder's claim.<sup>68</sup> In Herder's own mind, however, it is patent that, in order for a sign to be able to designate a thought or object, someone has to recognize that it does so and the capacity for this sort of recognition is a natural gift akin to instinct in animals, namely, the power of reflection (*Besonnenheit*). By "reflection" Herder means a force (*Kraft*) saturating all conscious bodily activity in a human being ("the whole undivided human soul") and thus not separate from any sensation yet capable of both distinctly—not merely clearly—attending to an "object" by distinguishing a mark (*Merkmal*) of the object and recognizing that it is doing so.<sup>69</sup> Herder thinks that nonhuman animals are incapable of having distinct ideas, though it is hardly clear that they are, if distinctness consists only in distinguishing a part of the object on the basis of which the object can be re-identified (e.g., a sheep recognizing

67. See Herder, *Sämtliche Werke*, V, 40: "Ohne Sprache hat der Mensch keine Vernunft und ohne Vernunft keine Sprache"; see *ibid.*, 100; Herder, *Sämtliche Werke* XXI, 9, 88; for a linguistic critique of the thing-in-itself, see *ibid.*, 173f.

68. On Herder's appropriation of themes from his predecessors and unfairness to them, see Hans Aarsleff, "The Tradition of Condillac: The Problem of the Origin of Language in the Eighteenth Century in the Berlin Academy before Herder," in *Studies in the History of Linguistics*, ed. Dell Hymes (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), 93–156; Bruce Kieffer, "Herder's Treatment of Süßmilch's Theory of the Origin of Language in the *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*: A Re-evaluation," *Germanic Review* 53 (1978): 96–105. Hinrich C. Seeba argues that these critics fail to appreciate Herder's insight into the nonconventional and nondiscursive aspects of language; see Seeba's "Word and Thought: Herder's Language Model in Modern Hermeneutics," in *Johann Gottfried Herder: Innovator Through the Ages*, ed. Wulf Koepke with Samson B. Knoll (Bonn: Bouvier, 1982), 35–40, and Charles Taylor, "The Importance of Herder," in *Isaiah Berlin: A Celebration*, ed. Edna and Avishai Margalit (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 40–63. Aarsleff is also criticized by Jere Paul Surber for "denying any originality to the native German tradition"; see Surber, *Language and German Idealism: Fichte's Linguistic Philosophy* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities, 1996), 18. See, too, Michael M. Morton, "Herder and the Possibility of Literature: Rationalism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Johann Gottfried Herder: Innovator Through the Ages*, 41–63, and G. W. Wells, "Condillac, Rousseau and Herder on the Origin of Language," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 230 (1985): 233–46.

69. For this emphasis on the distinctness of reflection and the role of the distinguishing feature, see *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, 32f., 36, 42f., 46, 57, 70, 81f., esp. 83: "Animals combine their thoughts obscurely or clearly, but not distinctly." This equation—at least at a certain level—of human language with a mental sign introduces a basic ambiguity regarding the measure of its subjectivity or even conventionality.

the bleating of another member of the flock, hidden from view). Herder is, however, also claiming that this re-identifiability or recognizability is biconditionally related to some level of self-consciousness, a claim which lends his theory about the human distinctiveness of this use of signs some warrant. In any event, the mark of reflection is "the word of the soul," a claim entailing the inseparability of reflection, the capacity for distinct apperception, and language (though something akin to a private language is countenanced).<sup>70</sup> Herder thus makes his own Leibniz's conception of *apperceptio*, which he translates "recognition" (*Anerkennung*).<sup>71</sup> The recognition of this power as one's own is also the basis of self-determination: "No longer an infallible machine in the hands of nature, he becomes himself the purpose and aim of the work."<sup>72</sup> In sum, Herder is arguing that, in order for language to serve as an instrumental system of conventional signs designating thoughts and objects, it is necessary for human beings to agree to this arrangement and the basis of that agreement is the distinctively apperceptive and self-determining character of human consciousness.<sup>73</sup> What distinguishes the human be-

70. Herder registers the equivalence of reflection and what in the twentieth century might be called the "intentionality" underlying the semantic use of signs. *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, 32: "This first distinguishing mark of reflection was the word of the soul! With it, human language is invented!" In Herder's own example, a sheep's bleating is the distinguishing mark by means of which it is known and named. If the sheep and its features were obscure, then it could not be distinctly perceived/named. Herder uses this same account to give his take on the commonplace that the first language was poetry as the imitation of nature; cf. *ibid.*, 50.

71. *Ibid.*, 32. Herder's "explanation" emphasizes not only the human difference but also its continuity with nature and other species. In this respect he follows Shaftesbury (as well as Reimar, Rousseau, and Kant) in developing a common principle of the respective interaction between environment and native powers that differs in the case of humans and other animals; the power of sensations and instincts is inversely related to their range and herein lies the basis of human freedom; see *ibid.*, 20–26 and 149–54. Nevertheless, reflection implies not merely lively or clear knowledge but the capacity to recognize distinguishing features: "the first act of this recognition yields distinct conception; it is the first judgment of the soul" (*ibid.*, 32).

72. *Ibid.*, 26.

73. In the second section of the first part of the essay, Herder lists five explanations of language, each rejected for looking to something other than reflection for its origin: (1) the physiological explanation: the origin of language is to be found in the human body's particular tools for speaking; (2) the affective/expressive explanation: the origin of language is to be found in the sounds of passion; (3) the mimetic explanation: the origin of language is to be found in the natural propensity to imitate; (4) the societal/conventional explanation: the origin of language is to be found in the voluntary, arbitrary agreement of society; (5) the divine explanation: the origin of language is to be found in divine bestowal, instruction of it. The first three explanations might be labeled "naturalistic" today in the sense that they rely upon some natural feature of human behavior that is ostensibly similar to the behavior of other animals. The fourth ("intersubjective") explanation is also rejected, as it was by Rousseau, but in Herder's case on the basis of the purported necessity of reflection which can be interior and private. But Herder's objection to all such explanations, including the divine one, is their failure to recognize the distinctively apperceptive



ing, according to Herder, from other animals is the fact that a human being alone “knows that it knows, wants, and acts.”<sup>74</sup>

The second part of Herder’s treatise opens with the line: “Nature gives no forces in vain.”<sup>75</sup> Human beings are endowed with reflection, a capacity of human language, in the interest of preservation and progress. After iterating that “there is no condition in the human soul that is not capable of words or actually determined by words of the soul,” he declares: “As bold as it might sound, it is true: *the human being feels with the intellect and speaks because he thinks*. And because he thus also always thinks further and, as we say, holds each thought in stillness with the previous one and the future, *then each condition that is connected by means of reflection, must think better, thereby also speak better*.”<sup>76</sup> This declaration aptly captures the complexity of Herder’s aesthetic holism and the difficulties that its legacy bequeaths to German idealism. Thinking, feeling, and speaking form a whole that is temporal and, for that reason, never complete. Yet specifying the unity and the diversity of these parts of the whole presents an enormous problem, one epitomized by the synthetic character assigned by Herder to language. Human language may well be a synthesis of sensibility and understanding but if sensibility and understanding cannot be distinguished, it is not clear how that claim itself can be meaningfully sustained or how, indeed, any criterion for distinct reflection, the supposed hallmark of humanity, can be given. In a thoroughgoing holism, there is no *primus inter paribus*. A related difficulty is the patent appeal to an “intuitive understanding,” something that Kant rejects but Hegel later applauds<sup>77</sup> and has a variant in the “intellectual intuitions” also rejected by Kant but affirmed by Fichte as well as by Schelling and Hegel at early stages in their thinking.<sup>78</sup> A final related difficulty has already been mentioned but resurfaces here as Herder affirms the progressive character of language, in keeping with mankind’s inherently social make-up and the “chain of culture.”<sup>79</sup> Yet the assertion

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character of human consciousness and its necessity for language. See Herder’s praise for Sulzer’s essay on apperception (*Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, 32n) and his reference to the “web” (*Gewebe*) (ibid., 61).

74. Ibid., 28.

75. Ibid., 80.

76. Ibid., 86.

77. See Irmischer’s afterword to *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, 159f.; Kant, *KU*, 180f., 406; Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4, 341.

78. Fichte, *Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, in *Fichtes Werke*, I 463; Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* (1800), with an introduction by Walter Schulz (Hamburg: Meiner, 1957), 37.

79. *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*, 98: “No individual human being is here for itself; he is inserted into the whole of the species, he is only one for the progressing succession.” See, too, “the second law of nature,” ibid., 95. The expression “chain of culture” (ibid., 113, 116, 120f.), iterated by Herder in the *Ideas* (Herder, *Sämmtliche Werke*, XIV, 229), resurfaces in Hegel’s introductory lecture on the history of philosophy in Heidelberg in 1816.

of this progressiveness stands in apparent contradiction of his insistence elsewhere on the relativeness of any earthly standpoint and the divine presence in every age.<sup>80</sup>

## Schiller and the Aesthetics of Play

In addition to corresponding with Kant occasionally, Hamann, Herder, and Schiller elaborate their respective views by way of critical contrasts with those of Kant who, at least in the case of Herder and Schiller, responds publicly in kind. Mention has already been made of Kant's harsh reviews of Herder's historical writings, leading to a breach in their relationship. Between Kant and Schiller matters proceed much more amicably, particularly as the focus shifts from theoretical to practical reason and aesthetic judgment. When Schiller endorses Kant's moral principles but objects to his manner of presenting obligatoriness independently of grace, Kant suggests that there need be no disagreement among them as long as duty, the dignity of which is in his view necessarily independent of grace, is distinguished from virtue, which is not. In the end Schiller is not fully persuaded by the points Kant is making.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, Herder by no means shares Schiller's apparent enthusiasm for the transcendental turn introduced into philosophy by Kant.

Schiller is not connected to the German idealists by a one-way street, as were Hamann and Herder. While Hamann dies before Fichte publishes a single word and Herder is generally dismissive of the latest publications of Fichte and Schelling, Schiller openly acknowledges a debt to Fichte's efforts to rethink Kant's transcendental philosophy. In 1794,

80. *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, 82f., 109f. Herder apparently had only a single conversation with Fichte, which occurred in August 1795, but Herder writes a letter that plays an important role in the "atheism controversy" and Fichte's subsequent dismissal from Jena in 1799. When Fichte threatens to make a public inquiry into Herder's orthodoxy and reproaches him for being an atheist, Herder does not respond, though he does speak out against a "transcendental Spinozism" of "spinning the entire universe out of a self-important narrow ego" (in the foreword to the second edition of *God, Some Conversations*), a criticism clearly directed at Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* (Jena 1794) and Schelling's *Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie* (Tübingen 1795). Schelling's master's thesis *De prima malorum origine* (Tübingen 1792) is oriented to Herder's exegesis of Genesis in the mythical-historical manner presented in *Älteste Urkunde* and some of Herder's ideas on the philosophy of nature can be detected in Schelling's *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (Leipzig 1797) and *Von der Weltseele* (Hamburg 1798). The foreword to Herder's *Kalligone* (1800), however, contains some satirical plays on the so-called third period of history in Schelling's *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* (Tübingen 1800). See the essays by Arnold and Zammito in Heinz, *Herder und die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, (1997).

81. For more on the exchange between Kant and Schiller, initiated by the latter's essay "On Grace and Dignity," see the following essay in this volume: "The Ethical and Political Legacy of Aesthetics: Schiller's Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Mankind."

the year of Fichte's move to Jena, he and Schiller serve on the same editorial board of the new philosophical journal in which Fichte contributes his essay on language mentioned earlier. In that same year Fichte provides Schiller with an advance copy of the *Foundation of the Theory of Science* and its theme of the reciprocity of drives finds its way, a year later and with proper acknowledgment, into Schiller's pivotal account of the unifying play drive and beauty in his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Mankind*.<sup>82</sup> Yet there is reason to think the acknowledgment disingenuous or at least more a matter of rhetoric than substance, given the extraordinary role that Schiller, in stark contrast to Fichte, assigns to aesthetics and given the eventual clash between them.<sup>83</sup>

At the same time, perhaps in part because of his manner of appropriating some of Fichte's concepts, Schiller is also a clear favorite of Schelling and Hegel, each of whom cuts his teeth on Fichte's thought.<sup>84</sup> Though all three idealists in different ways are laboring to establish a systematic conception of the sort of self-developing reason or spirit in history elaborated by Herder, none of them addresses his work in any sustained way. But the same cannot be said for Schiller's writings, especially his *Letters* and *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*. Together these works provide a model of dialectic that manages to be historical, logical, and aesthetic at once and yet, for that very reason, also provides a challenge

82. Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre*, in *Fichtes Werke*, I 287–90, 293f., 319f.; Schiller acknowledges his debt to Fichte in the fourth and thirteenth letters; see, too, his July 4, 1794, letter to Körner; see Friedrich Schiller, *Briefe*, ed. Fritz Jonas (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1892–96), vol. III, 466f.; for a reading of Schiller's *Letters* in the light of Fichte, see Hans-Georg Pott, *Die schöne Freiheit* (Munich: Fink, 1980).

83. Thus, an anonymous reviewer of the present book in manuscript form suggests that, in light of their fundamentally different philosophical orientations and the different use that Schiller puts to Fichte's concept of *Wechselwirkung*, Schiller's footnote crediting Fichte with the concept is sheer politesse, a cookie to hold at bay someone of notorious sensitivity. Lending some support to this interpretation is the fact that, in 1795, Schiller and Fichte have a falling out as Schiller rejects Fichte's essay "On the Spirit and Letter in Philosophy" for confusing philosophical and nonphilosophical styles. Schiller proceeds to propose a "beautiful sort of writing" (*schöne Schreibart*) that synthesizes the abstract terminology of philosophy with the sensuous imagery of popular writings, thereby exhibiting a productive and not merely reproductive style. For further discussion, see Todd Curtis Kontje, *Constructing Reality: A Rhetorical Analysis of Friedrich Schiller's Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Humanity* (New York: Lang, 1987); see, too, in a similar connection, Juliet Sychrava, *Schiller to Derrida: Idealism in Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). For a different emphasis, with a survey of interpretations before 1969, see J. M. Ellis, *Schiller's Kalliasbriefe and the Study of His Aesthetic Theory* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969); see, too, R. D. Miller, *Schiller and the Ideal of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) and Steven D. Martinson, *Harmonious Tensions* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996).

84. Schelling pays Schiller a visit in 1796; for Schelling's views on Schiller's aesthetics, see his *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K. F. A. Schelling, vol. V (Stuttgart/Augsburg: Cotta, 1859), 470–77, 463n; Hegel maintains that Schiller comes closest to his own speculative conception; see Annemarie Gethmann-Siefert, *Die Funktion der Kunst in der Geschichte* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1984), 349 n. 44; this valuable work reviews Hegel's intensive engagement with Schiller.

to philosophy itself—or at least to the sorts of philosophy championed by Schelling and Hegel.

Schiller's differences with Kant are particularly telling for the German idealists. One such difference, his resistance to the foundational claims made by Kant for an allegedly pure practical reason, that is to say, a moral reason devoid of moral sense ("grace"), has already been mentioned. In keeping with Schiller's aesthetic holism, this difference is intimately related to his refusal to accept what he took to be the overly subjectivistic character of Kant's aesthetics. After initially construing a "critique of taste" to be hopeless since its principles are empirical, Kant manages to arrive at transcendental principles for aesthetics, though these are merely principles for reflections upon the forms given to a knowing subject (spatial and temporal configurations that are themselves dependent upon the imagination). Schiller continues this move from an empirical to a transcendental conception of beauty and he also joins Kant in regarding the contemplation of beauty as a means of effecting a transition from nature to morality.<sup>85</sup> In these respects at least, his aesthetics has more affinities with Kant's than with that of Herder or Hamann. However, in Kant's understanding of the aesthetic transition from nature to morality, each of these domains retains its self-sufficiency and validity independent of the other. In Schiller's eyes there is, by contrast, a higher, aesthetic unity to nature and morality, a unity that completes the human being, by integrating a person's identity with her changing conditions, her dignity with her happiness.<sup>86</sup> This completeness of a human being is an aesthetic state, the play of reason and sensibility, directed at beauty. Thus, while Kant construes beauty in subjective terms, namely, as the form of an object that, when represented, sets cognitive capabilities into a kind of "free play," Schiller defines beauty objectively as a "living form," the object corresponding to a drive that completes human nature by freeing it from the constraints of sensual and rational drives at once: the play drive. Schiller accordingly observes that "with beauty man shall only play and it is with beauty only that he shall play. For, to mince matters no longer, man only plays when he is in the full sense of the word a human being, and he is only wholly a human being when he plays."<sup>87</sup>

Far from merely completing Schiller's critique of the subjective nature of Kant's aesthetics, this conception of an organic play drive and

85. On Kant's view of the role of culture in the relation of nature to morality, see the concluding pages of the opening essay of this volume ("The Unity of Kant's Critical Philosophy").

86. *Essays* 158.

87. *Essays* 131; translation slightly altered.

objective beauty has epistemological and moral implications as well, indeed, implications in keeping with the powerful legacy of aesthetic holism. For both truth and morality require a countenancing of objectivity that reason alone cannot provide. Acceptance of the objectivity of the world and others requires the ecstatic perspective of an aesthetic state where human beings put themselves in a position “outside themselves,” no longer relating to everything else as potential master or slave, but as an object of wonder and contemplation (“the first liberal relation to the surrounding universe”).<sup>88</sup>

But is this aesthetic state, then, means or end? Is it “a middle state” and “necessary precondition” or “the consummation of humanity” and “supreme reality”?<sup>89</sup> Conceived as a response to the French Revolution’s failures, Schiller’s *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Mankind* aim to demonstrate that “if man is ever to solve the problem of politics in practice he will have to approach it through the problem of the aesthetic, because it is only through beauty that man makes his way to freedom.”<sup>90</sup> In the course of the *Letters*, however, beauty and an aesthetic state are also described as constituting freedom itself, the objective self-determination in oneself and others that alone can beckon genuine honor and respect. Thus, claims that beauty has no say in the separate workings of the understanding or the will and that it serves us as a means of moving from a state of nature to a moral state are offset by observations that “the aesthetic [state] alone is a whole in itself,” the necessary intersection of a human being’s active, rational and passive, sensuous determinations.<sup>91</sup> The apparent discrepancy between transitional and consummative conceptions of the aesthetic state, for which Schiller is often criticized, is resolved, at least to some degree, by his doctrine of aesthetic semblance (“the very essence of fine art”) at the end of the *Letters*. The aesthetic realm is an independent world of semblances (“ornamentation and play”) that, precisely by displaying the ideal harmony of the whole in contrast to the divisiveness of the real world, holds the key to the transformation of the latter.<sup>92</sup>

88. *Essays* 162. On the difference between an aesthetic condition and an aesthetic state, see the following essay in this volume.

89. *Essays* 137, 152, 129, 148.

90. *Essays* 90.

91. *Essays* 149, 153–56, 176f.

92. A related difficulty presents itself with the problematic notion of aesthetic semblance (*ästhetischer Schein*), introduced in the final two *Letters*, problematic because Schiller argues for both the autonomy of the semblance and its political necessity; cf. *Essays* 168f., 176f. Cf. Gethmann-Siefert, *Die Funktion der Kunst in der Geschichte*, 61n, and David C. Durst, *Zur politischen Ökonomie der Sittlichkeit bei Hegel und der ästhetischen Kultur bei Schiller* (Vienna: Passagen, 1994). Toward the end of the *Letters* Schiller continues, to be sure, to insist that the aesthetic state is neither the absence nor the perversion of reason, but a means of purifying (!) reason and liberating it from self-imposed specters of “care and

From the *Letters*' opening apologies for favoring aesthetic over direct political engagement to their concluding account of the indispensability of the aesthetic realm for society, it is evident that Schiller, like Hamann and Herder before him, is preoccupied with the role of art in history and history in art. In keeping, too, with the practice, common to aesthetic holism, of drawing analogies between art and nature, individual and society, cognition and morality, Schiller hits upon a remarkably elastic developmental structure (inspired, to be sure, by Fichte) that Hegel later builds into his dialectical method. "Nature (sense and intuition) always unites, the understanding always divides, but reason unites once more," he observes.<sup>93</sup> The structure of immediacy, its negation, and their unity (negation of the negation) is at work throughout the *Letters* but full expression of its aesthetic and historical force is given in his *Naive and Sentimental Poetry* (1796). The concept of the naive captures the ancient and childlike immediacy of nature, belief, and sentiment, while the concept of the sentimental draws on the modern and adolescent preoccupation with itself, mediated by its reflective capacity to understand and remake itself (its science and art). As in the *Letters*, the resolution of these two divergent and separately limited tendencies is an ideal in which art returns to nature, though the *Letters* ends on a rueful note that it is only achieved in the "finely attuned souls" of a "few chosen circles."<sup>94</sup>

Schiller's enormous impact on German idealism is registered in no uncertain terms by Hegel himself in his *Lectures on Aesthetics*. "Schiller must be paid the great tribute," he declares, "of having broken through Kantian subjectivity . . . and of having dared to move beyond it, grasping unity and reconciliation" as the ultimate truth of things.<sup>95</sup> Schiller's conception of art, he maintains, comes closest to his own. As if this kudos were not enough, Hegel uses the conclusion to his review of Schiller's essays as a segue to remarks on how science arrived at an absolute standpoint. Hegel is referring specifically to Schelling, but the observation applies equally to his own philosophy. "This unity of the universal and the particular, freedom and necessity, spirituality and the natural, what Schiller grasped in a scientific way as the principle and essence of art

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fear" (*Essays* 159ff.). But he is also emphatic that only "the enjoyment of beauty or aesthetic unity" proves the compatibility of sensuality and rationality (*Essays* 164f.).

93. *Essays* 139n.

94. *Essays* 178, 233n; for Hegel's criticism of what he takes to be the individualistic and elitist, insufficiently political and historical direction of Schiller's aesthetic theory, epitomized by the notion of a "beautiful soul," see Gethmann-Siebert, *Die Funktion der Kunst in der Geschichte*, 17–28, 148–52, 347–59; see, too, my essay "'Die schöne Seele' bei Schiller und Hegel," in *Hegel-Jahrbuch*, 1990, ed. Karol Bal and Heinz Kimmerle (Bochum: Germinal, 1992).

95. Hegel, *Werke*, XIII, 89.

and relentlessly tried to call into actual life by means of art and aesthetic education, was then made *as the idea itself* into the principle of knowledge and existence and recognized as what is alone true and actual."<sup>96</sup> In the process, Hegel adds, the scientific place of art was found.

This last remark is particularly telling inasmuch as both Schelling and Hegel respond to the legacy of aesthetic holism by according art a foundational place within their scientific systems, though they do so in markedly different ways. In the *System of Transcendental Idealism* Schelling construes poetry as the alpha and omega of philosophy in the course of making his argument for an absolute identity of opposites, available through an intellectual, but nonobjective intuition. That identity becomes objective only in art, "the sole true and eternal organon and at the same time document of philosophy," the union of "what is separate in nature and history."<sup>97</sup> Schiller's differentiation of naive and sentimental is recast by Schelling as a contrast between the beautiful and the sublime, the objective and the subjective, a contrast that is overcome by "poetry in its absoluteness."<sup>98</sup> In Hegel's mature work, he also elaborates the concept of art as an absolute, though Hamann's incarnate whole is replaced, in a reinterpretation of the third person of the trinity, by absolute spirit, "the supreme truth . . . the dissolution of the ultimate opposition," freedom and necessity, spirit and nature, individual ("subjective spirit," nature becoming self-conscious) and the community ("objective spirit," the self-consciousness of a shared ethical life). But art is only the first stage of absolute spirit, superseded historically and systematically by religion and philosophy. Hegel is, of course, under no illusion that to appropriate the legacy of aesthetic holism in this way is to subvert it. As he puts it in words that not even Schelling, let alone Hamann, Herder, or Schiller could endorse: "For us art is no longer the supreme way in which truth procures existence for itself" and "the form of art has ceased to be the highest need of the spirit."<sup>99</sup>

96. Ibid., 91.

98. Ibid., V, 468–74.

97. Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, III, 628.

99. Ibid., 141f.



## Chapter 6

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# THE ETHICAL AND POLITICAL LEGACY OF AESTHETICS Friedrich Schiller's Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Mankind

*"Their taste is purer than their heart."*—Letter 9

Before Friedrich Schiller, there were ample testimonies to the impact of art, for good and for ill, on moral and political sentiments, just as surely as there were other voices placing art at arm's length from morality and politics, in effect, liberating it from the pulpit and the marketplace. Schiller's singular achievement in his work *The Aesthetic Education of Mankind in a Series of Letters* is his elaboration of a conception of art and aesthetics that sets out to reconcile these seemingly contradictory voices. In the process Schiller articulates the promise of aesthetics for politics. At the crossroads of diagnosis and therapy, history and philosophy, the *Letters* (as they are referred to hereafter) present considerable interpretive challenges, as discussed below. Nevertheless, Schiller manages in the *Letters* to construct the following basic argument about the political legacy of aesthetics: precisely because an aesthetic state is the historical apotheosis of the human condition, art is the only means of transforming human beings and transcending the limitations of contemporary science, morality, and politics.<sup>1</sup>

1. See *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen* [On the Aesthetic Education of Mankind in a Series of Letters]. *Die Horen, eine Monatschrift* (1795), I, nos. 1 and 2: 7–48, 51–94; II, no. 6: 45–124. The standard contemporary source for this work is Benno von Wiese and H. Koopmann, eds., *Schillers Werke*, national edition, vol. 21 (Weimar: Böhlhaus, 1962), 232–77. For a very helpful German edition, see Wolfgang Iser, ed., *Friedrich Schiller. Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen: Text, Materialien, Kommentar* (Munich: Hanser, 1981). The standard English translation with helpful commentary is Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, trans. and ed. Elizabeth M. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967). This translation (without the notes) is reprinted with a selection of Schiller's other essays on aesthetics in Friedrich Schiller, *Essays*, ed. Walter Hinderer and Daniel Dahlstrom (New York: Continuum, 1993), 86–178.



Schiller's accomplishments as a poet and playwright provide important clues to the *Letters*' significance.<sup>2</sup> His 1789 poem "The Artists" already heralds not only his confidence in art's inimitable capacity to cultivate and safeguard human dignity but also his conviction of its responsibility to do so (*"Der Menschheit Würde ist in eure Hand gegeben, Bewahret sie!"*). Social realities and the prospects for political change—in scripts and in audiences—are constants of Schiller's dramatic horizon, from the stormy plays of the early 1780s, such as *The Robbers* and *Intrigue and Love*, to the brooding and conflicted historical pieces, *Maria Stuart* and *Wallenstein*, composed in neo-classical style just after the *Letters*, and his last play, *Wilhelm Tell*, with its paean to a people's struggle for freedom, staged in 1804, a year before his death.

There is more than an echo of the dramatic and historically idealized character of this rich theatrical legacy in Schiller's *Letters*. Yet they owe their literary form, at least in part, to the fact that they were originally drafted as letters to Schiller's benefactor, the Prince of Schleswig-Holstein-Augustenburg, in gratitude for a *stipendium* that Schiller, battling with illness and poverty, had desperately needed. The original drafts of these letters were destroyed in a fire at the Danish prince's castle in 1794. Undaunted, Schiller promptly drafted the present version of the *Letters*, publishing them in three installments (*Letters* 1–9, 10–16, 17–27) in his monthly, *Die Horen*, in 1795. But the form of the *Letters* is also well-suited to their programmatic character. For while the *Letters* proceed from a historical state of affairs (principally defined by the failures of the French Revolution and the inadequacies of the Enlightenment), they deliberately invoke "feelings no less often than principles" in an effort not merely to instruct but also to persuade readers of yet unrealized possibilities of human achievement and the singular means to their realization.

## An Outline of the Letters

The first group of *Letters* demonstrates the need for such instruction by depicting the dire state of contemporary culture. "Utility," Schiller

2. Details from Schiller's biography are also relevant here. Born in Stuttgart in 1759 and originally educated as an army doctor, Schiller fled Württemberg when, following the success of his first play, *Die Räuber*, the Duke forbade him to write on anything but medical topics. A concern for positive historical change and the role of arts in this process occupied him during the ensuing years of political exile, financial hardship, and poor health. His admiration for the Greeks (see the 1788 poem "The Gods of Greece") contributes to his positive view of historical possibilities, though his historical sensibilities keep him from indulging in Hellenic revivalism. Eventually Schiller becomes professor of history at the University of Jena in 1789, on the strength of his progressive-minded *History of the Revolt of the Netherlands*, published a year earlier.

charges, “is the great idol of our age,” an age in which the savagery and indigence of the lower classes is matched by the perverse and indolent inertia of the upper, dooming any hope for change, as the events in France demonstrated only too well. In the light of this gloomy assessment, preoccupation with art must, Schiller concedes, appear frivolous and self-indulgent. Yet neither the state nor reason, he argues, can provide the way out of his age’s maladies. Political reform is chimerical as long as citizens have not achieved moral self-sufficiency, and resolved “the conflict of blind urges” within and among themselves by “withdrawing from the blind violence of nature and returning to its simplicity, truth, and fullness—a task for more than a century,” he adds. If reason and philosophy in an “enlightened” age are supposed to be the answer, “how is it then,” Schiller asks, “that we remain barbarians?” The way to the head must be opened, he insists, through the heart. Hence, the thesis of the *Letters*: “If man is ever to solve the problem of politics in practice he will have to approach it through the problem of the aesthetic, because it is only through beauty that man makes his way to freedom” (*Letter 2*).

In the first group of *Letters*, the former military physician reviews the symptoms, makes his diagnosis, and proposes a cure. But the proposed cure is not only untested; experience—as Rousseau so eloquently emphasized—speaks volumes against it. The second installment of *Letters* accordingly pursues a “transcendental path,” fashioning “a purely *rational concept of beauty*” that, while abstracting from any actual instance, coincides with unrealized possibilities of the human condition. In the final group of *Letters* Schiller refines this conception with a view to the contingencies and limitations that make up actual experience, as he elaborates the necessary role played by an “aesthetic condition” in liberating and perfecting the individual and the species as a whole.

## Schiller and Kant

By Schiller’s own admission, the *Letters* are significantly influenced by the thought of several contemporaries. The turn, in the second installment of the *Letters*, from empirical observation to a speculative account of humanity and beauty explicitly incorporates Fichte’s conception of basic drives and their reciprocity.<sup>3</sup> The telling motto of the *Letters*

3. This adaptation is part of the reason for the considerable influence that the *Letters* exercised on the remarkable trio of young thinkers at Tübingen: Hölderlin, Schelling, and Hegel. Each of these thinkers could appreciate Schiller’s critique and aesthetic adaptation of Fichte’s insights and would ultimately echo Schiller’s theme of art’s liberating possibilities, thanks to its relative independence from science, the state, the church, and

is taken from Rousseau's *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse* ("If it is reason that makes a man, it is sentiment that guides him") and the first installment of *Letters* iterates Rousseau's diagnoses of the age and culture (though it rejects the Genevan's conclusions). Winckelmann, as well as Schiller's friends Goethe and Wilhelm von Humboldt, helped inspire his enthusiastic portrait of the Greeks as a reason for continued hope in the possibilities of humanity in a degenerate age (see *Letter 6*). At the same time, Schiller probably has Herder to thank for resisting the nostalgic urge to portray the aesthetic transformation proposed in the *Letters* as a revival of a classical Greek perspective. While Schiller admits that the Greeks are "our models" and "put us to shame," an aesthetic education of mankind, as he understands it, is very much a question of historical possibilities quite unavailable to the Greeks.

Yet of all the shadows cast by Schiller's contemporaries on the *Letters*, none looms larger than that of Kant. Like his relationship to Rousseau, Schiller's relationship to Kant is complicated by a persistent struggle to take a predecessor's insights in a direction beyond their initial horizon. In the opening *Letter*, for example, Schiller asserts that his remarks are based upon certain "Kantian principles," notably, the dominant ideas of Kant's practical philosophy. This apparent endorsement need not be disingenuous or purely rhetorical, but it is also clear that it is highly qualified.<sup>4</sup> For in the same opening *Letter*, he immediately contrasts the much-debated technical form given those principles by Kant with the unanimous acceptance of them on the basis of the "moral instincts" implanted in human beings by nature. He thus makes appeal to the very naturalism and moral sense rejected by Kant as a foundation for morality. (For Kant, development of moral sense is required but ancillary to the foundational questions of ethics.)

Throughout the *Letters* Schiller sketches a dualistic picture of human beings in ways that starkly resemble Kant's own contrasts between the claims of pure practical reason and those of experience rooted in na-

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common morality. For more on this influence, see the preceding essay in this volume and my two recent entries on Schiller and Schlegel in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2nd ed., ed. D. Borchert (New York: Macmillan, 2006), 626–32.

4. Just as research on Hamann struggles to recover the rationality of his thought ignored by early commentaries, so there is a tendency among researchers on Schiller to reinstate the deliberately rhetorical dimension of his aesthetic writings in the wake of previous attempts to read them primarily as philosophical tracts; cf. Todd Curtis Kontje, *Constructing Reality: A Rhetorical Analysis of Friedrich Schiller's Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Humanity* (New York: Lang, 1987); Juliet Sychrava, *Schiller to Derrida: Idealism in Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); for a different emphasis, with a survey of interpretations before 1969, see J. M. Ellis, *Schiller's Kalliasbriefe and the Study of His Aesthetic Theory* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969); see, too, R. D. Miller, *Schiller and the Ideal of Freedom* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) and Steven D. Martinson, *Harmonious Tensions* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996).

ture and culture. Yet, in apparent contrast to Kant, Schiller rejects the notion that one pole of the dualism—notably, reason—should gain the upper hand. In this connection Schiller's essay "On Grace and Dignity," published three years before the *Letters*, deserves mention. In that essay Schiller objects, not to Kant's account of the moral obligatoriness of acting from duty, but to his presentation of that obligatoriness in the absence of grace. Kant himself responded in print that Schiller's problem arises only if duty, the dignity of which is necessarily independent of grace, is confused with virtue, the dignity of which is not.<sup>5</sup> The concept of duty contains in Kant's eyes "an unconditioned necessitation" that can be founded on reason alone, i.e., pure practical reason that does not bring any sensuous element into play (as it does in the case of virtue).<sup>6</sup> Since Schiller does not explicitly return to this foundational issue in the *Letters*, one of their persisting ambiguities is whether they should be taken as complementing or subverting Kantian ethics.

If the relation of Schiller's concept of an aesthetic education to Kantian ethics is unclear, the same cannot be said for its relation to Kant's aesthetics. To be sure, Schiller freely adopts Kantian terminology but in this respect he plainly does so with the unabashed aim of transforming it. In other words, the aesthetic character of the education proposed by Schiller may be based upon the principles of Kant's practical philosophy in some sense but it is not "aesthetic" in the Kantian sense of the term. For Schiller, beauty is not a purposeless form and the experience of it is not a mere play of human faculties. Instead, beauty has a vitality that transcends human subjectivity and yet, for that very reason, holds an incomparable historical promise for human beings.

Prima facie Kant and Schiller would concur with one another that aesthetics is a means of transition from a natural to a moral condition. Yet this concurrence is misleading inasmuch as Schiller regards the culmination of that transition as an aesthetic state. For this aesthetic state

5. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VI, 23f. n.

6. Ibid. Another way to put the matter, in Kant's terms: Schiller's "misunderstanding" is the result of confusing the *principium diiudicationis* with the *principium executionis*. See Immanuel Kant, *Vorlesung zur Moralphilosophie*, ed. Werner Stark, intro. Manfred Kuehn (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2004), 55f.: "Wir haben hier zuerst auf zwey Stücke zu sehen, auf das principium der Diiudication der Verbindlichkeit, und auf das principium der Execution oder Leistung der Verbindlichkeit. Richtschnur und Triebfeder ist hier zu unterscheiden. Richtschnur ist das principium der Diiudication und Triebfeder der Ausübung der Verbindlichkeit, indem man nun dies verwechselte, so war alles in der Moral falsch." However, note that this quote from Kant's ethics lectures in the mid-1770s does not square with his views in the *Grundlegung*. As Kuehn (ibid., xxix) puts it: "Der kategorische Imperativ hat im Vergleich mit der Position der Vorlesung zugleich den Status des *principium diiudicationis* und den Status des *principium executionis*." Kant's shifting position on the equivalence of a subjective and objective principle strongly suggests that Schiller's criticisms have a point, one that troubled Kant himself.

would topple the barriers, erected by Kant and others, that separate nature, morality, and aesthetics into insular domains of self-contained faculties. Such barriers, Schiller submits, reflect and reinforce the specialization and alienation plaguing modern humanity. Schiller does not deny that there is a kind of “cosmic purpose” served by the antagonisms that result from these divisions, but he also insists that these divisions, if not healed, lead to barbarism. Thus, the aesthetic education proposed by Schiller can by no means be restricted to matters of taste in isolation from questions of science and politics. While a barbarian impulse may survive in techno-science’s efforts to master nature, “the cultivated human being makes nature his friend” (*Letter 4*).<sup>7</sup>

### The Objective Promise of Beauty: “The Play’s the Thing”

The human being whom Schiller proposes to educate is torn. On the one hand, human beings are in a sensuous condition, a passive and ever-changing state of sensations and feelings, joy and sadness. On the other hand, every human being is a person, capable of self-consciously thinking, reasoning, and initiating action. Though mutually irreducible, both the *person* herself and her *condition* are necessary to being human, giving rise to two basic laws of human nature: “to externalize all that is within him, and give form to all that is outside him” (*Letter 11*). Corresponding to these two laws are two basic drives: a sensuous drive toward the material content of individual, momentary sensations, and a formal drive toward the necessary form of universal, eternal laws. Each of these drives is compelling, even coercive in a different way; the sensuous drive acting as a physical constraint, the formal drive as a moral constraint. Though nothing might seem more opposed than these two drives, Schiller maintains that the “task” of culture and reason is to give each its due, intensifying both to the point that they have a moderating effect upon one another. Coordination, not subordination of one drive to another, is the order of the day.

Schiller admits that such a task is never fully attainable, that completion of it amounts to “the perfect consummation” of humanity. Yet if there are experiences in which human beings are able both to think and to feel at once, they would intuit their humanity completely and the objects that yield such intuitions would serve as symbols of mankind’s destiny. Such experiences would, furthermore, awaken a new drive, the

7. Schiller’s approach to the human phenomena and prospects discussed in this paragraph has interesting similarities and dissimilarities to the approaches of Social Darwinians, Marxists, and Heideggerians. It would be instructive to elaborate the convergences and divergences in these approaches.

play drive, that reconciles the other two basic drives, albeit by canceling the respective coerciveness of principle and desire. (In play we are immersed in nature, interacting with our surroundings, but imaginatively, thoughtfully, where the rules of the game like the play itself—*das Spiel*—are experienced not as constraints but as ways of enabling a kind of unforced mastery of what we are doing, though not, to be sure, of ourselves.) In *Letter 27* Schiller gives a genealogy of play, from the physical play of an overflowing nature to the free play of human fantasy and association, culminating in aesthetic play with the capacity to transform sexual desire.

As the object of the sensuous drive is life and the object of the formal drive is form, so the object of the play drive is a living form, Schiller's definition of beauty.<sup>8</sup> For those who consider it demeaning to humanity and beauty to construe the latter in terms of play, Schiller has the famous, fully consistent retort: "man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays" (*Letter 15*). Moreover, beauty—"our second creatress"—is the key to humanity's potential to transcend itself precisely because it is the object of the play drive. In this anthropological aesthetics that is equally an aesthetic anthropology, the promise of beauty is the promise of humanity. As noted above, Schiller restores to the notion of beauty an objectivity that is missing in many treatments of beauty in the eighteenth century by Kant and others. Beauty is no longer centered in some form of imagination or in some correlate to taste or aesthetic satisfaction. At the same time, thanks to this definition, beauty concretely embodies the self-determining, autonomous unity of form and matter (virtue and happiness, dignity and grace) that is, even in Kant's moral terminology, "the highest good." In this way, beauty has a moral efficacy and aesthetics a political legacy.<sup>9</sup>

8. Regrettably, perhaps, Schiller does not clarify what sorts of things precisely embody this living form. The obvious paradigm of a living form is the play *das Spiel*, which occupies a paradigmatic place in Schiller's own artistic practice and conception of artworks, though he no doubt takes the idea of beauty as a living form to extend to natural beauties. Complicating matters is the fact that Schiller construes beauty, this living form, as the object of the so-called "play drive" (in what is an obvious, critical appropriation of Kant's account of the play of the faculties—imagination and understanding—at work in judgments that something is beautiful). There are at least three senses of "play" here that need to be differentiated: the play that is written and staged (presented here as an example of a beautiful object, as Schiller conceives it); the play that is a drive and has beauty, a living form, as its object (in Schiller's aesthetic theory); and the play of cognitive faculties (in Kant's aesthetic theory).

9. The considerable assumption here, an assumption that Schiller shares with Aristotle and Kant, is that politics and political philosophy are necessarily bound in some sense to ethics (*Nicomachean Ethics*, book 1, chapter 2: 1094a18–12). See the further discussion in the final segment of this essay.

Schiller immediately complicates matters by distinguishing two kinds of beauty, a melting (calming, relaxing) and an energizing (disturbing, intensifying) beauty, apparently in an attempt to rethink the traditional distinction between the beautiful and the sublime. Though the idea of beauty calls for the “perfect reciprocal action” of both, experience presents us only with one or the other of these two kinds of beauty. (In the *Letters* Schiller oddly discusses only the “melting” beauty at length.)<sup>10</sup>

In any case, Schiller maintains in the *Letters* that beauty and the aesthetic condition are the ineluctable means to a moral condition at the level of the individual and the species. “Man in his *physical* condition merely suffers the dominion of nature; he emancipates himself from this dominion in the *aesthetic* condition, and he acquires mastery over it in the *moral*” (*Letter 24*). Yet Schiller also observes that the step from the aesthetic to the moral condition is “infinitely easier” than that from the physical to the aesthetic condition. He complicates the issue further by warning against imagining that there ever was a time when someone was only in one condition or that all three are not at hand as necessary conditions “in every individual perception of an object.” So, too, in the last group of *Letters*, it would seem that, if the aesthetic condition is necessary for moral mastery, its necessity is not something that we leave behind, “growing out of it,” like adolescence, on the way to maturity. In this respect, however, it is necessary to distinguish two sorts of moral mastery, a tyrannical mastery of the ever-rebelling animal in us, and a graceful self-mastery in which our dignity and our happiness, our practical reason and our feelings, are not at odds. This graceful self-mastery is the epitome of moral, i.e., human freedom. Beauty is precisely the living proof that such freedom is possible, “that a human being need not flee matter in order to manifest herself as spirit” (*Letter 25*).

## The Paradoxical Truth of Art

Schiller is well aware that, in addition to experience and history, logic itself seems to speak against the task set by the *Letters*. Political change for the better requires a change in attitudes, though attitudes are them-

10. “Concerning the Sublime” (first published in 1801 but begun around 1795) is sometimes regarded as a possible attempt to address the energizing beauty. But some critics see in this essay considerable evidence that Schiller is doing an about face from the confidence in the prospects of harmony and progress that we find in the *Letters* as well as in *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*. For discussions of the essay “Concerning the Sublime” in this connection, see Lesley Sharpe, *Friedrich Schiller: Drama, Thought, Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 167f., and Julius A. Elias’s introduction to his translation, *Naïve and Sentimental Poetry / On the Sublime* (New York: Ungar, 1980), 48–75.



selves formed by the political culture. The only way out of this vicious circle—a version of the old Platonic quandary regarding the teachability of virtue—is to find some means not afforded by the state and not infected, at least not inevitably so, by political corruption. In a further, perhaps paradoxical gloss on Plato, Schiller finds such a tool in art, precisely as the semblance of truth. When nature has lost its nobility, “truth lives on in the illusion,” as he puts it, and where attitudes are venal, he advises: “surround them with symbols of the noble until the semblance overturns the reality and art nature”—that is to say, art overturns the nature no longer noble (*Letter 9*).

Schiller returns to the moral efficacy of “aesthetic semblance” in the last two *Letters*. Basic needs must be met, he notes, before aesthetic semblance can be indulged, though such indulgence is also a natural development of seeing and hearing. These two senses are unique because they do not simply receive but help produce their objects. In the process, the play drive develops, as people find enjoyment in mere semblance, as does then the mimetic drive to shape and form this or that semblance as something relatively self-sufficient (though only “relatively” since it is a human product and subject to human dictates). As these drives develop, the realm of beauty expands but also gives further definition to the boundaries between semblance and reality. Only in this world of semblance, moreover, does the artist enjoy sovereign rights. What makes the artist an artist, and renders semblance aesthetic, is a certain honesty (no pretense of being real) and autonomy (dispensing with all support from reality) on the part of both the artist and the semblance, the artwork, that she creates.

In the end, the aesthetic semblance is self-reflexive and self-redeeming. In an important respect, art is the semblance of semblance, the illusion of illusion. Unlike the illusions to which they otherwise have a certain kinship, the aesthetic semblance forefronts that it is a semblance and, in the process, redeems or, better, redefines the human relationship to the reality of which it is a semblance (or, in some cases, simply resembles). The aesthetic education overturns a deficient, actual stage of human nature because art in this way, that is, by means of aesthetic semblance, is capable of articulating ever higher human possibilities. These are possibilities, moreover, at the crossroads of the individual and the species. In contrast to the strictly private and needy undergoing of a sensual pleasure, the enjoyment of semblance is a pleasurable activity that is inherently shareable, yet not by virtue of some dictate of a *volonté générale*. Herein lies yet another side to the promise of beauty discussed earlier. Only in an aesthetic state (*Staat*) can we confront each other, not as enforcers of our respective rights (“the fearful kingdom of forces”) or as executors of our wills (“the



sacred kingdom of laws”), but as free and equal citizens: “the third joyous kingdom of play and of semblance” (*Letter 27*).

Schiller’s claims for the mediating role of the aesthetic condition, on the one hand, and for the consummatory character of the aesthetic state, on the other, have been a source of continual debate among scholars. Slippage from one use of a term to another (e.g., “moral” and “ethical”), conflation of synchronic and diachronic perspectives, and the enormity of the task that he poses for himself in the *Letters* have clearly contributed to the confusion. Nor should the distance between a work of art and a work of character be minimized any more than that between funding the arts and feeding the hungry. Yet there is also good reason not to separate means from end in the never-ending quest of a holy human will. After all, for great artistry and nobility of character, practice is the means that must be constantly renewed and no stage is incapable of improvement. For Schiller, even the most elementary sort of aesthetic condition does not merely set the stage for human perfection; it already is the realization *in nuce* of that perfection. As he himself puts it in a romantic flourish worthy of Novalis: “In the eyes of a reason that knows no limits, the direction is at once the destination, and the way is completed from the moment it is trodden” (*Letter 9*).

## Chapter 7

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### HEGEL'S SCIENCE OF LOGIC AND IDEA OF TRUTH Countering the Skeptical Legacy of Formalism in Philosophy

To criticize a philosopher's views properly a primary requirement is an accurate understanding of the questions he raises, the problems he acknowledges, and the procedures he follows. In the following study I attempt to identify the specific question of truth which Hegel addresses, the basis of the sort of skepticism posing a serious threat to its resolution, and finally a strategy he adopts in attempting to answer the question. The specific question of truth is the question of the objectivity of thought, a question that Hegel understands, for reasons discussed below, as a metaphysical question. The sort of skepticism Hegel has in mind is one which rejects the possibility of claims about the objectivity of thought and does so on the basis of certain purported conditions of human knowing that operate as constraints on it. Part of Hegel's response to this skepticism involves analyzing those various conditions in an encyclopedic fashion. The more limited focus of this paper is his analysis of the *logical* conditions of human knowing (objective thinking).

Hegel's analysis of logical categories is meant to demonstrate their spiritual character, a developing, self-referential, and self-determining unity of thought and its other.<sup>1</sup> The end of the analysis in Hegel's *Science of Logic* presents an abstract of the actual development of human spirituality which he identifies as the "Idea." This manner of interpret-

1. This essay is largely an attempt to specify the sense in which Hegel's science of logic at once confirms, anticipates, and presupposes the conception of the absolute in his system, a conception culminating in what he deems "absolute spirit." For construals of Hegel's philosophy as an "onto-theo-ego-logy" and an "onto-pneuma-logic," see Martin Heidegger, *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes*, complete edition, vol. 32 (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1980), 183, and James Collins, *The Emergence of the Philosophy of Religion* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1968), 278–92.

ing Hegel's logic, if correct, provides a way of understanding not only the nature of his response to skepticism but also the role that the *Science of Logic* is supposed to play in his systematic, metaphysical account of truth. Moreover, if careful attention is paid to a distinction between the idea and the reality of spirituality, on the one hand, and to a distinction between the order of explanation and its systematic presentation—the *ordo cognoscendi* and the *ordo discendi et exhibendi*, as it were—on the other, this interpretation also enfeebles several traditional criticisms of the role of Hegel's *Science of Logic* at the beginning of his system.

## Truth, Formalism, and Skepticism

"The expression 'objective thoughts' signals the *truth* which ought to be the absolute *object*, not simply the *goal*, of philosophy."<sup>2</sup> Hegel concedes that this characterization of truth is highly problematic, pointing to many a fatal conflict between thinking and objectivity. The tendency to oppose thinking and objectivity rigidly had, in his words, "taken control of philosophy" in the modern age.<sup>3</sup> Thinking was viewed as "only finite and only subjective," and, lacking access to objectivity, relations among thoughts or categories could not be rationally demonstrated.<sup>4</sup> Skepticism about the prospects of making true judgments, i.e., judgments *embodying* objective thoughts, was inevitable. Thus, for Hegel, the question of truth in his time centered precisely on the "determination and validity" of this dualism.<sup>5</sup>

One main source of the dualistic thinking at which Hegel takes aim is what he labels "formalism."<sup>6</sup> Formalism is the view that thinking is purely formal or instrumental, that logic (comprising the rules of thinking) abstracts from all content, while "what belongs to an instance of knowl-

2. *Enzyklopädie* §25, 68 (HL, 45).

3. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 29 (HSL, 45).

4. *Enzyklopädie*, §25, 68 (HL, 45). For Hegel, the inadequacy of Kant's metaphysical deduction of the categories (i.e., their mere assumption from formal logic) is tied to the lack of a theoretical development of the categories' interrelations, something Kant himself suggests, and to the merely hypothetical unity of schematized categories with empirical concepts.

5. *Enzyklopädie*, §25, 68 (HL, 45). See also *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 11f. (HPS, 8).

6. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 37f. (HPS, 29f.): "Dieser Formalismus, meint die Natur und das Leben einer Gestalt begriffen und ausgesprochen zu haben, wenn er von ihr eine Bestimmung des Schemas als Prädikat ausgesagt. . . . Es werden dabei teils sinnliche Bestimmungen aus der gemeinen Anschauung aufgenommen, die freilich etwas anderes *bedeuten* sollen, als sie sagen, teils wird das an sich Bedeutende, die reinen Bestimmungen des Gedankens, wie Subjekt, Objekt, Substanz, Ursache, das Allgemeine usf. gerade so unbesehen und unkritisch gebraucht wie im gemeinen Leben und wie Starken und Schwächen, Expansion und Kontraktion, so daß jene Metaphysik so unwissenschaftlich ist als diese sinnlichen Vorstellungen." See also *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 12f. (HPS, 9).

edge, the matter, must be given from somewhere else.”<sup>7</sup> Often (though not necessarily) tied to formalism is the assumption that the material of knowledge is something sensed.<sup>8</sup> Since this sensuous material, which *may* include such things as feelings, perceptions, and desires, is only subjective and private, so, it would seem, are any ensuing judgments.<sup>9</sup> In short, “knowing has reverted to opinion.”<sup>10</sup>

In order to refute this sort of formalism, it is necessary to dispel the twin notions that thought is intrinsically formal or instrumental *and* that the “matter” of knowledge inevitably enters the process of thinking in some purely arbitrary, private fashion. Much of Hegel’s philosophy can be accurately conceived as a thoroughgoing attempt to disestablish both notions. As mentioned at the outset, this paper is concerned solely with his attempt to refute the first of these two notions.

In the *Science of Logic* Hegel analyzes categories of thinking, such as those of formal logic, categories which even some skeptics might presuppose as first principles, i.e., categories for which there is seemingly no further court of appeal. By beginning with the sort of principles acceptable to the forms of skepticism he is opposing, Hegel’s argument is much like transcendental arguments of the sort attributed to Kant. However, while transcendental arguments are directed traditionally at skeptics’ doubts about knowledge of external objects or of other minds, Hegel’s argument is aimed at the skeptic who denies knowledge of the sort of truth identified by Hegel as metaphysical. If thinking is in some sense relational—whether the relation be understood as reflecting, pic-

7. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 28 (HSL, 43f.). This distinction of the form and matter of knowledge also takes the form of two sorts of thinking, a formal and rationalizing (*räsonnierend*) thinking and a material thinking absorbed in imaginative representations. See *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 42f. (HPS, 35).

8. See note 6 above. Not all formalisms make this assumption. Hegel classified not only Kantian schematizing as a formalism—in which case this assumption is patent—but also the procedures of followers of Fichte and Schelling. In the latter’s case the material of knowledge would rest on an intellectual intuition.

9. For the sake of brevity, Hegel includes a host of items, e.g., sensations, feelings, perceptions, representations, desires, interests, under the formalist heading of the “matter” of knowledge. Nevertheless, in his own system, as well as in traditional and contemporary versions of formalism (see note 14 below), these items are carefully distinguished.

10. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 30 (HSL, 45f.). Two historical antagonists, a tradition of religious piety and the Enlightenment, form a curious alliance on the issue of the irreconcilability of thinking and objectivity. Religious piety demands reason’s submission to faith on penalty of despair. The Enlightenment, initially skeptical of religious faith, finds no end to its skepticism, not even in reason itself, thus reaffirming the primacy of faith in feelings and symbols. By identifying the religious character of Enlightenment thinking (“positivity”), Hegel fashions a critical model, widely used by Feuerbach and Marx, for understanding philosophies as ideologies in terms of religion. For examples of this familiar theme, see Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 116–87, and *Enzyklopädie*, Preface to the third edition, 29f. (not given in HL). See, too, the chapter “Mutual Need and Frustration: Hegel on the Religious Legacy of Modern Philosophy” in this volume.

turing, representing, or grasping—the categories of logic may be described as the rules or structure of thinking's relational nature. One task of the metaphysician in Hegel's sense is to think, articulate, and explain this structure itself. To assert that the structure or rules of thinking cannot themselves be explained is to assert the philosophical primacy of formal logic (i.e., logic without metaphysics) and then, too, the validity of skepticism in regard to metaphysical truth.

By making the categories themselves the objects of thought, Hegel attempts to unpack their content, not as instruments whose significance lies solely in their application, but as forms of thought worthy of consideration in their own right.<sup>11</sup> Hegel thereby attempts, too, to demonstrate the relations among the categories, relations that always include the relation to and thus the thought of the counterpart or opposite of each category as well. So construed, these relations, recognizable only insofar as the categories are subjected to conceptual analysis themselves, constitute the objectivity or what is true of such thoughts.<sup>12</sup> Not surprisingly, by rejecting a formalist position on thought, Hegel also rejects a conception of truth as a correspondence between forms of thought and some material allegedly given in a way ultimately *beyond or inaccessible* to the realm of thought. For in order for us to recognize that material corresponds to thought, we must be able in some sense to think that material, thereby eviscerating the very pretension attached to the operative term "correspondence." Hegel's rejection of formalism and truth as correspondence (at least in the sense indicated) goes hand in hand, as he himself concedes, with some version of idealism. But, if so, it is an idealism that necessarily countenances the spiritual character of things as their absolute reality. For Hegel argues, too, that the objective significance of the categories, logically analyzed and displayed in terms of their relations, in the last analysis rests on an idea of spirit. The reality of this spirit, in turn, *embodies* those feelings, perceptions, and desires

11. This procedure may help explain Hegel's cryptic remark: "Ihr [die Aristotelische Logik] Fehler ist nicht, dass sie nur Form sind, sondern Form fehlt." Hegel, *Werke*, XIX, 239. For the instrumentality or formalism, see *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 37f. (*HPS*, 30). Thus, the examination is not a consideration of tools not in use or even "an engine idling," in which case Hegel's science of logic would serve as a proto-evolutionary investigation. Just as a Marxist might read Hegel's concept of spirit as a bourgeois, idealized version of capital reproducing and augmenting itself, so a Darwinian might read it as a confused abstraction from the biological character of thinking, contributing to the survival of the fittest species. But Hegel's logic is abstract only in the sense that it presents the thinking profile of the spirit.

12. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 14 (*HPS*, 10): "... [N]ur diese sich *wiederherstellende* Gleichheit oder die Reflexion in Anderssein in sich selbst—nicht eine *ursprüngliche* Einheit als solche oder unmittelbar als solche, ist das Wahre."

which, according to the formalist skeptic's argument, constitute the arbitrary matter of knowing.

At the outset of this paper I cited Hegel's characterization of the truth as "objective thoughts." More precisely, the truth for Hegel is the existence of spirit emerging from nature at personal, public, and absolute levels (recognition of oneself, others, and their self-reflective unity in nature and history). The decisive feature of this spirit is a complete process of self-determination, essential ingredients of which are its knowledge of itself and its expression of itself. This conception of truth may be considered "metaphysical" inasmuch as it is understood to underlie the matter and form—the objectivity of thought—of all philosophical sciences.

Given this metaphysical conception of truth, the rationale behind Hegel's strategy for answering the skeptics becomes clearer. If the principles of formal logic or any sort of rules for thinking are empty in the sense that they are incapable of analysis or demonstration of any sort, they are fatal to Hegel's metaphysical conception of truth. Were they neither genuine expressions of human spirit nor genuinely capable of being reflected upon by the human spirit, or, in other words, if they did not, when analyzed, reveal a content of their own, these categories of thought would have only an arbitrary validity, a validity at odds with the normative role even skeptics (e.g., Hume) attribute to them.

Before examining an instance of Hegel's analysis in the *Science of Logic*, it might be helpful to note a popular version of the sort of formalism behind the skepticism Hegel contests. This popular version is the view that questions of truth are to be resolved only contextually, only within a *given* conceptual framework—a system of accepted categories, proof techniques, and confirmation procedures. Questions of truth are resolved within the presupposed context or given framework with the presumption that the system's conceptual framework would remain largely unaffected by these findings. Questions of truth of the conceptual framework itself cannot be meaningfully addressed to such a system "from the outside." To raise such a question is simply to confuse distinct levels of discourse. For example, a proposition *S* within a given context or framework may be considered true or false on the basis of whether it pictures a state of affairs. But the second-order proposition "*S* is true" can hardly be said to picture a state of affairs in the same way (a consideration that leads to disquotational and redundancy theories of truth). Or, if it does, how would the truth be determined other than by appeal to procedures of yet another conceptual framework? This appeal not only undermines the initial system but also produces either an unhappy

regress or the proverbial *circulum vitiosum* to boot.<sup>13</sup> In short, in order to avoid patent absurdities, there seems to be no recourse to distinguishing sharply those questions that are internal to the conceptual framework from those that are external.<sup>14</sup>

It is obvious to Hegel that what is true for such a formalism is determined by the interests that are served by the system or by the perceptions to which the system is applied (and that this disjunction is nonexclusive). Arbitrariness reigns in that the interests or perceptions are said to determine what is true for the conceptual framework but are themselves considered indeterminate relative to the framework itself. For neither the interests nor the perceptions, so the argument goes, can be questioned as to their truth without purportedly confusing distinct levels of discourse.

Hegel suggests that behind this formalism there lurks the old prejudice that forms of thought are slaves of the passion, that they are merely means in the service of “self-sufficient forces and powers” such as feelings and desires might be construed to be.<sup>15</sup> To disarm this prejudice Hegel attempts in his *Science of Logic* to demonstrate that thought has a content and motion of its own. (Hegel reserves for his philosophy of spirit the task of challenging the notion that feelings or desires are “self-sufficient forces and powers.”) Moreover, far from excluding or distorting the meaning of “feelings,” “desires,” and “perceptions,” that content and motion of thought is a necessary ingredient to their real, determinate significance. That real, determinate significance is a spirituality: a process of self-determination by more or less self-conscious human agents, a process that perceptions, feelings, and desires embody, and that logical categories express.

These considerations reveal a further reason why Hegel attempts to demonstrate metaphysical truth and refute its skeptics, namely, his understanding of human freedom as a form of self-determination. Understood as autonomous forces somehow moving “my” psychosomatic machinery, feelings and desires are mere abstractions, but abstractions fatal, in Hegel’s estimation, to human self-determination. Hegel does

13. Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, book 1, chapter 3 (72b5–73a20).

14. Rudolf Carnap, “Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology,” in *The Linguistic Turn*, ed. R. Rorty (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 73, and Gilbert Ryle, “Systematically Misleading Expressions,” *ibid.*, 85–100. In the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* Hegel explicitly characterizes the skeptical consciousness as an unconscious rambling back and forth between the one extreme of a certainty raised above all contingency and the other extreme of an utterly bewildering contingency. See *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 142f. (HPS, 125).

15. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 13 (HSL, 35). *Enzyklopädie*, §382, 382 (HPM, 15): “Das Wesen des Geistes ist deswegen formell die Freiheit, die absolute Negativität des Begriffes als Identität mit sich.” For the self-knowledge and self-expression contained in Hegel’s concept of spirit, see *Enzyklopädie*, §377, 379, and §383, 382 (HPM, 16).

not deny that, in fact, the forms of thought may be in the service of such abstractions. Nor does he deny that feelings and desires constitute, in a significant manner, what I call my “self.” Nevertheless, these views of human reality remain ways of thinking about it. Moreover, such feelings and desires are mine rather than the other way around only inasmuch as the I is a spiritual reality, a self-conscious and self-determining being. The *Science of Logic* demonstrates this spirituality from a logical point of view and thereby also undermines the “logic” of claiming that desires or feelings move me.

## The Spirituality of Logical Forms: The Idea of Truth

Hegel’s *Science of Logic* is an analysis of the presuppositions of various ways of thinking. What distinguishes Hegel’s analysis is his insistence on being ruthlessly logical. By “ruthlessly logical” I mean that he demands that forms of thought be considered in complete abstraction from any single image or empirical instance of the forms. This complete abstraction is one sense of the negativity that Hegel acknowledges as his sole presupposition.<sup>16</sup> While there is good reason to be skeptical of the possibility of this complete abstraction in the case of a metaphysical project like Hegel’s (indeed, like a complete phenomenological reduction in the case of Husserl’s transcendental project), it would probably be rash to conclude that such efforts are thereby useless—rash because we do countenance such formalisms in more specific or limited areas of research, most notably mathematics, and because the possibility of pursuing and even approximating such a standard is not necessarily canceled by its incompleteness. To be sure, Hegel himself generally seems to have far less modest pretensions.

Hegel’s “ruthlessly logical” attitude is, in any event, the key to his account of the relations among categories of thinking. As a predicate and a universal, a category is conceived in its full range of significance only if the category’s relation to its opposite and to itself (i.e., its self-predication) are conceived. Through this complete conception the category “moves” (itself) from its initial sense to a sense that involves its direct counterpart or opposite. By requiring the inclusion of its opposite for its complete comprehension, the subsequent sense of the category represents a kind of denial of the ordinary conception of the category. This denial furnishes another sense of the negativity primitive to Hegel’s investigation.<sup>17</sup>

16. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 38 (HSL, 54, 58).

17. Of course, this self-predication follows immediately from the completely abstract consideration discussed in the preceding paragraph. If a category is completely abstracted, it can refer only to itself.



What I have called the “ruthlessly logical” features of Hegel’s analysis of the forms of thought is perhaps less dramatic and hopefully less obscure than it might initially seem. These features are simply a function of making the forms of thought themselves objects of thought. The fundamental character of thinking for Hegel is its negativity, the fact—and this is its liberating character—that thought in some sense denies what might be construed to be simply and indeterminately given to the thinker, i.e., given in some unconnected way. This denial or negativity underlies thought’s abstractness and its universality in that thought supersedes and unites what is disparate, thereby rendering it ultimately irreducible to isolated instances. Thus, to consider a form of thought in its abstractness and universality is also to consider not only the meaning of its relation to what is other than it, but also the meaning of its self-predication. In short, to consider forms of thought in complete abstraction, universality, and self-predication is to *think* the forms of thought.

These features of Hegel’s *Science of Logic* may be illustrated in his account of identity and difference.<sup>18</sup> For example, Hegel conceives the logical concept of identity as a pure reflection. Identity is a relation to itself alone, a self-predication in abstraction from anything other than the reflection it is.<sup>19</sup> Yet such an identity is inconceivable without the concept of difference.<sup>20</sup> Hence, if the logical form of identity is to have any content or determinate significance, i.e., is to be thought, it must in some sense include difference. A similar state of affairs holds for the logical concept of difference. “Difference,” Hegel writes, “is the negativity which reflection has within itself.”<sup>21</sup>

18. Hegel’s accounts of these categories are in “Essentialities or Determinations of Reflection” in the *Science of Logic* and in “The Pure Determinations of Reflection” in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*; see Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 11, 258–90 (*HSL*, 408–43), and *Enzyklopädie*, §§112–20, 143–51 (*HL*, 162–75).

19. *Enzyklopädie*, §115, 146 (*HL*, 166): “Das Wesen scheint *in sich* oder ist reine Reflexion so ist es nur Beziehung auf sich, nicht als unmittelbare, sondern als reflektierte,—*Identität mit sich*.” Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 11, 260 (*HSL*, 411). It may be objected here that Hegel confuses the logical operation or relation of identity with a psychological description, viz., reflection. The trenchancy of the objection turns on whether Hegel succeeds, as he intends, in giving an account of identity in terms of an analysis of reflection in its universality, i.e., in abstraction from any particular psyche. Relevant here is the consideration of the ways in which identity may be said to function as a relation or as a predicate.

20. That is to say, the concept of identity entails the concept of difference. The entailment in the case of identity is not based only on the general principle that a relation or a reflection always involves a difference. Identity is truly predicated of itself only by being different from every difference. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 11, 262 (*HSL*, 412): “Oder die Identität ist die Reflexion in sich selbst, welche dies nur ist als innerliches Abstoßen, und dies Abstoßen ist es als Reflexion in sich, unmittelbar sich in sich zurücknehmendes Abstoßen. Sie ist somit die Identität als der mit sich identische Unterschied.”

21. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 11, 265 (*HSL*, 417): “Der Unterschied ist die Negativität, welche die Reflexion in sich hat.”

The difference in itself is the difference referring to itself. Thus it is the negativity of itself, the difference not from an other but rather *of itself from its very self*. It is not its very self, but rather its other. But what is differentiated from difference is the identity.<sup>22</sup>

The analysis of the logical forms of identity and difference, conceived in complete abstraction from empirical identities and differences, demonstrates that these forms cannot be conceived in abstraction from each other. Their respective self-predications are contradictory in that each category collapses into its counterpart. The determinacy or content of these forms of thought lies solely in their union within reflection.

As a refurbishing of several insights contained in Plato's metaphysical masterpieces (notably the *Parmenides* and *Sophist*), Hegel's accounts of the relations among such categories have a certain plausibility. Yet his choice of categories and specific transitions within the *Science of Logic* deservedly receive their share of criticism. The account of the categories' movement seems replete with arbitrariness and appeals to unrevealed intuitions.<sup>23</sup> There is also undoubtedly a kind of ruse in presenting or at least presuming a category's ordinary or scientific usage and shifting its sense (equivocating, some might say) in the manner described above.<sup>24</sup>

These criticisms are weighty but Hegel himself makes some qualifica-

22. Ibid., 266 (HSL, 417): "Der Unterschied an sich ist der sich auf sich beziehende Unterschied so ist er die Negativität seiner selbst, der Unterschied nicht von einem Andern, sondern seiner von sich selbst; er ist nicht er selbst, sondern sein Anderes. Das Unterschiedene aber vom Unterschiede ist Identität." Ibid., 262 (HSL, 413): "Der Unterschied ist aber nur identisch mit sich, insofern er nicht die Identität, sondern absolute Nichtidentität ist. Absolut aber ist die Nichtidentität, insofern sie nichts von ihr Anderes entthält, sondern nur sich selbst, d. h., insofern sie absolute Identität mit sich ist."

23. Too often overlooked today, Trendelenburg's critique of the *Science of Logic* challenges the notion that logical categories can be considered in complete abstraction and even attempts to identify the intuitions secretly at work in Hegel's works. See Adolf Trendelenburg, *Logische Untersuchungen* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1964), 94. In this study I am presenting an interpretation that might provide an answer to Trendelenburg's objection. Hegel, of course, speaks best for himself; *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 525 (HPS, 487): "Es muß aus diesem Grunde gesagt werden, daß nichts *gewußt* wird, was nicht in der *Erfahrung* ist, oder wie dasselbe auch ausgedrückt wird, was nicht als *gefühlte Wahrheit*, als *innerlich geoffenbartes* Ewiges, als geglaubte Heiliges, oder welche Ausdrücke sonst gebraucht werden,—vorhanden ist."

24. Dieter Henrich, "Hegels Logik der Reflexion," in *Hegel im Kontext* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), 95–156. Henrich speaks of the "Bedeutungsverschiebung zum Wesen." See also J. N. Findlay, "Reflexive Asymmetry: Hegel's Most Fundamental Methodological Ruse," in *Beyond Epistemology*, ed. Frederick Weiss (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1974), 154–73. The ruse is twofold, viz., presupposing one meaning for a category and then shifting the meaning by self-predication. In regard to the first part of the ruse, it is not clear to me how Hegel would respond to an Austin-like charge that concepts have more distinctive senses than the one Hegel assumes. For a discussion of Hegel's exploitation of the ambiguities of *Schein* in the opening section of the *Wesenslogik*, see my "Between Being and Essence: Reflection's Logical Disguise," in *Essays on Hegel's Greater Logic*, ed. George di Giovanni (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 99–111.

tions that at least mitigate their force. For example, he recognizes that particular divisions and their accompanying explanations within the *Science of Logic* are often arbitrary, meant only to provide its readers with “a provisional overview” and “indication of its contents.”<sup>25</sup> He concedes further that the method he employs is capable of greater development and expansion.<sup>26</sup> As for the choice of categories analyzed, these are generally time-honored presuppositions of various forms of thinking, preeminently metaphysical or epistemological principles, some of which serve as props of formal logic. In *Anmerkungen* throughout the *Science of Logic*, Hegel explicitly notes previous philosophers’ accounts of categories he discusses.<sup>27</sup> Under Hegel’s analysis, the domain of such presuppositions is the singularly unrestricted domain of thinking itself. Hegel simply considers the full implications of membership in that domain, especially of those members traditionally considered essential or determining principles of that domain. Hegel’s thesis, exemplified in the brief review of identity and difference above, is that there is a content to thought, a motion and structure of relationships, exhibited in *this* consideration of thought’s presuppositions. Thought itself generates this motion by its own distinctive characteristics, viz., the abstractness, universality, and self-predicateness entailed by the negativity of thinking (or, better, Hegel’s conception of that negativity). Hence the movement of categories is in some sense self-directed.

Suppose Hegel has given a defensible account of relations and movements among logical categories. Does this not simply redress formalism in the guise of an absolute system of thought? As noted earlier, demonstrating the content of the forms of thought is a necessary, but by itself insufficient, condition for refuting formalism and the skepticism about truth it engenders. Indeed, how can we be sure that the content of thought’s determinations does not exclude or distort the content of feelings, perceptions, and desires (the matter and alleged content of formalism’s form)? Has not Hegel himself arbitrarily sealed off a domain of discourse (namely, the *Science of Logic*’s metaphysical discourse) from talk about actual historical and individual feelings and interests and then reduced the latter to the structure of that domain? These are the legitimate questions raised by Kierkegaard and Trendelenburg, Feuer-

25. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 39 (*HSL*, 54f.).

26. *Ibid.*, 38 (*HSL*, 54): “Die Methode, die ich in diesem Systeme der Logik befolge . . . noch vieler Vervollkommung, vieler Durchbildung im einzelnen fähig sei.”

27. For Hegel’s argument that philosophy and the history of philosophy necessarily develop out of and corroborate one another, see *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 32–39, 119–20, 149; an exposition of the argument can be found in my essay “The Spirit of Philosophy and Its History,” *Hegel-Jahrbuch* 17 (1982): 49–62.

bach and Marx, among others.<sup>28</sup> These thinkers commonly object to the systematic character of Hegel's philosophy, epitomized by the timeless priority Hegel accords his *Science of Logic*. Obviously, if those thinkers are correct, Hegel not only fails to answer the skeptical challenge of formalism but also reconstitutes formalism in an absolute manner.<sup>29</sup>

As noted above, Hegel does not maintain that his thinking in the *Science of Logic*, i.e., the relevant thinking about thinking, displayed in this work, is free of arbitrariness. There is also reason to think that he at times imposes his logic on studies of nature or of the lives of human beings. Nevertheless, the general conclusion to the *Science of Logic* indicates that the content of the forms of thought is far more intimately related to the content of human experience (the spiritual reality of such things as feelings, perceptions, and desires) than Hegel's critics would have us believe. This conclusion, moreover, explains Hegel's dogged insistence that, despite the admitted shortcomings of his presentation, the method of his system is "the only true" one,<sup>30</sup> the method which alone is the way to truth. For it is precisely this intimate relation between the content of logical forms and the content of human experience that Hegel's metaphysical conception of truth—what he calls "the spirit"—designates: the self-determining objective thoughts that underlie *both* the form and the content of all the philosophical sciences.

Hegel concludes the *Science of Logic* in general with what he calls "the Idea" or "adequate concept." In stark contrast to his predecessors' usage, he employs "Idea" as the logical term for the truth, "the unity of concept and objectivity."<sup>31</sup> In a strict sense, the proof that the Idea is the

28. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. David Swenson and Walter Lowrie (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1944), 131: "Speculative philosophy . . . transforms the historical personality into something different in order to understand him." Ibid., 132: "Speculative philosophy . . . after depriving him of his soul . . . attempts to transform the historical individual into a metaphysical determination, a sort of categorical designation for the relation between cause and effect, immanently conceived." Ludwig Feuerbach, "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie," in *Werke in sechs Bände*, vol. 3: Philosophische Kritiken und Abhandlungen, ed. Erich Thies (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), 36: "But precisely because Hegel has not actually placed himself in sensible consciousness and thought within it, because sensible consciousness is an object only inasmuch as it is an object of thought's self-consciousness, and because sensible consciousness is only the expression of thought within the self-certainty of thought, even the *Phenomenology*—or the *Logic*, since it comes to the same—thus begins with an immediate presupposition of itself. Consequently, it begins (*quod erat demonstrandum*) with an unmediated contradiction, an absolute break with sensible consciousness" (my translation).

29. Some contend that Hegel's failure confirmed the futility of a philosophical science of metaphysical truths or "objective thoughts," thereby inspiring and strengthening the rise of positivism and pragmatism. See Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

30. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 38 (*HSL*, 54).

31. *Enzyklopädie*, §213, 215 (*HL*, 274): "Die Idee ist das Wahre *an und für sich*, die ab-

truth entails the whole of the *Science of Logic*.<sup>32</sup> Yet Hegel recapitulates at least two arguments in his account of the Idea. First, the Idea expresses *that* there is some unity of concept and reality (or some truth) since a concept is always a concept of an object. What something actual is supposed to be if there is nothing conceivable in it, i.e., if its actuality defies conception, cannot be articulated; nor is a concept anything but, strictly, i.e., grammatically speaking, an object conceived (“concept” derived from the Latin past participle *conceptus*, the conceived, just as *Begriff* derives from the past participle *begriffen*).<sup>33</sup> Secondly, as the unity of apparent opposites, the Idea seems contradictory to a formalist understanding which bifurcates its universe of discourse into, if not mutually exclusive, then at least disjunctive domains. Yet, as evidenced in the outline of identity and difference, the *Science of Logic* demonstrates that such categories, taken in complete abstraction (and thus abstraction from each other), are contradictory and “move over” to their respective opposites. Thus, a unity to such categories, namely, the Idea, reveals itself as their truth.<sup>34</sup>

At least three features of Hegel’s account of the Idea have special significance for his effort at establishing his metaphysical conception of truth. First, the Idea is itself a *concept*, albeit an adequate one, the object of which is the unity of concept and reality. Having demonstrated the contradictoriness of radically isolating categories such as identity and difference or subjectivity and objectivity, Hegel indicates that their relation or unity is itself a concept. Only in this “adequate concept,” then, can such categories be said to have content and to obtain and persist.

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*solute Einheit des Begriffs und der Objektivität.*” Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 173 (HSL, 755): “Die Idee ist der adäquate Begriff, das objektive Wahre oder das Wahre als solches.” Thus, the “Idea” is not intended as an image or representation casually associated in the mind. The necessity Kant recognizes in thought’s dialectic of generating ideas of reason is retained in Hegel’s logical Idea, but any purely regulatory, postulatory, or other-worldly character is not.

32. HL, 276.

33. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 174 (HSL, 756): “Wenn gesagt wird, es finde sich in der Erfahrung kein Gegenstand, welcher der Idee vollkommen kongruiere, so wird diese als ein subjektiver Massstab dem Wirklichen gegenüberstellt; was aber ein Wirkliches wahrhaft *sein* solle, wenn nicht sein Begriff in ihm, und wenn seine Objektivität diesem Begriff gar nicht angemessen ist, ist nicht zu sagen; denn es wäre das Nichts.” See *ibid.*, 174f. (HSL, 755).

34. *Enzyklopädie*, §214 Zusatz, 216f. (HL, 277): “Wenn der Verstand zeigt, daß die Idee sich selbst widerspreche, weil z.B. das Subjektive nur subjektiv und das Objektive demselben vielmehr entgegengesetzt . . . und so fort durch alle Bestimmungen hindurch, so zeigt vielmehr die Logik das Logik Entgegengesetzte auf, daß nämlich das Subjektive, das nur subjektive, das Endliche, das nur endlich, das Unendliche, das nur unendlich sein soll und so ferner, keine Wahrheit hat, sich widerspricht und in sein Gegenteil übergeht, womit das Uebergehn und die Einheit, in welcher die Extreme als aufgehobene, als ein Scheinen oder Momente sind, sich als ihre Wahrheit offenbart.”

Secondly, as exemplified above in the movement of the categories of identity and difference, the relations or content of such categories, expressed by the Idea, is a *process*. The Idea is not simply the oneness of concept and reality but a “becoming” which necessarily maintains the “most rigid opposition within itself.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, the unity of concept and reality is not given but comes to be and must be conceived.

Finally, the Idea is a *self-conception*. This self-conception is a notion much wider than an individual’s conception of its ego or self-identity. Rather the self-conception signified by the “Idea” is a conception of itself.<sup>36</sup> The result of willing and practice, this conception of itself is a kind of knowing which Hegel does not hesitate to designate an “intuition” and a “method.”<sup>37</sup> (This lack of hesitation is perhaps surprising since other philosophers, notably Kant and Schelling, use these terms in a manner that Hegel labels “formalist.”) The Idea is the intuition that, however disparate the elements of reality, they exist only in some specifiable unity. This unity’s specificity or concreteness, moreover, emerges. The unity may initially be disguised but conceptual analysis of the disguise, a *development* of its meaning, reveals a specific unity. Yet this unity does not exist prior to or outside its conception. Thus, that unity exists only via the process of self-conception, hence, only as an emerging and emergent unity. This process reveals the ultimate incoherence of conceiving categories nonholistically, i.e., in isolation from one another. At the same time, it is a process immanent to the categories and the relations among them. For example, as recounted above, inasmuch as analysis of the category of identity generates the category of difference, the ensuing unity of these categories is a development of the category of identity itself.<sup>38</sup>

35. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 177 (HSL, 759): “Die Identität der Idee mit sich selbst ist eins mit dem Prozesse.” Ibid., 176f. (HSL, 759): “Ob die Idee also gleich ihre Realität in einer Materiatue hat, so ist diese nicht ein abstraktes, gegen den Begriff für sich bestehendes *Sein*, sondern nur als *Werden*, durch die Negativität des gleichgültigen Seins als einfache Bestimmtheit des Begriffes.” Ibid., 177 (HSL, 750): “Die Idee hat um der Freiheit willen, die der Begriff in ihr erreicht, auch den *härtesten Gegensatz* in sich.”

36. J. P. Sartre, *The Transcendence of the Ego*, trans. Forest Williams and Robert Kirkpatrick (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), 45. Spinoza, *On the Improvement of the Understanding*, in *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, trans. R. H. Elwes, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1951), 11, 6.11–13. Both Sartre’s nonpositional consciousness and Spinoza’s idea may be considered elements of Hegel’s conception of the Idea.

37. *Enzyklopädie*, §244, 231 (HL, 296): “Die Idee, welche *für sich* ist, nach dieser ihrer Einheit mit sich betrachtet, ist sie *Anschauen*; und die anschauende Idee *Natur*.” Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 237 (HSL, 825): “Die absolute Idee selbst hat näher nur dies zu ihrem Inhalt, daß die Formbestimmung ihre eigene vollendete Totalität, der reine Begriff ist . . . für sich aber hat sie sich als dies gezeigt, daß die Bestimmtheit nicht die Gestalt eines *Inhalts* hat, sondern schlechthin als *Form*, daß die Idee hiernach als die schlechthin *allgemeine* Idee ist. Was also hier noch zu betrachten kommt, ist somit nicht ein Inhalt als solcher, sondern das Allgemeine seiner Form,—d. i. die *Methode*.”

38. In other words, Hegel is not denying or rejecting the various principles, such as

What these features of the Idea underline is the fact that the Idea, the general conclusion of the *Science of Logic*, is the logical form of the spirit.<sup>39</sup> The content of the Idea is essentially the result of the analysis (or dialectical demonstration, if you will), affirming truth in a metaphysical sense and that the unity of concept and reality composing this truth is a process of self-conception. That this interpretation of the Idea is not foreign to Hegel is further corroborated by its place in the *Science of Logic* and by Hegel's choice of examples to illustrate the meaning of the "Idea." Thus, the account of the Idea follows a discussion of objectivity whose mechanistic, chemical, and teleological models are normally applied to a study of nature. Within the division entitled "Idea," on the other hand, Hegel takes up the adequate concepts of life, knowing, and the absolute Idea, which serve as models for the spiritual domain described in Hegel's *Realphilosophie*.<sup>40</sup> Introducing the Idea in general, Hegel speaks of "wholes" such as the state, the church, and the human being to exemplify (only by way of introduction) the meaning of the "Idea." The mechanical and chemical world (whose logical categories precede the Idea in the *Science of Logic*) and even the spirit unconscious of its essence are abstractions in relation to the spirit.<sup>41</sup> Such abstractions come to have determinate significance, but only in relation to the spirit.

Yet, though the Idea presents an abstract of the spirit and is thus the conclusion and justification of the *Science of Logic*, the Idea designates this metaphysical truth only from a logical point of view.<sup>42</sup> Thus, Hegel

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those of formal logic, but only demonstrating the context of relations in which they have determinate meaning. But he is—quite radically, it seems—denying any determinate meaning to them outside of the context of a unifying process (or coming to be) of a self-conception. To put this last point another way, Hegel rejects the notion of an intelligible world or a world of essences existing alongside the world of appearances. Hegel's doctrine of essence demonstrated that essences must appear, i.e., they must have the immediacy of being, and only in this union of essence and appearance does the category of actuality come to be determinately significant. The idea, on another level (viz., the level of subjective logic or the concept), expresses this emergent unity of subjectivity and objectivity.

39. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 15: "Diese *logische* Natur, die den Geist beseelt, in ihm treibt und wirkt, zum Bewusstsein zu bringen, dies ist die Aufgabe."

40. Hegel takes pains to delineate the sameness and difference between the logical account of categories and natural, anthropological, or psychological accounts; see Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 179f. (HSL, 761).

41. *Ibid.*, 174f. (HSL, 756f.).

42. *Ibid.*, 253 (HSL, 843): "*Zweytens* ist diese Idee noch logisch, sie ist in den reinen Gedanken eingeschlossen, die Wissenschaft nur des göttlichen *Begriffs*. Die systematische Ausführung ist zwar selbst eine Realisation, aber innerhalb derselben Sphäre gehalten." That is, the *Science of Logic* is a realization of the absolute spirit of philosophy, the work of self-reflection by a philosopher attempting to articulate the truth about truth. But this reflection follows in time the natural emergence of spirit. See Robert Solomon, "Truth and Self-Satisfaction," *Review of Metaphysics* 28 (1975): 698, 724.



writes that the Idea “has, more exactly, only this for its content, that the determination of form is its own complete totality, the pure concept . . . the determinacy has not the shape of a *content* but rather in an unqualified manner as *form*.”<sup>43</sup> For this reason, too, the end of the *Science of Logic* is a method which must turn to nature and history for its content.

## The Reality of Truth and the Role of the Science of Logic

The spirit is the *real* justification or presupposition of the Idea which sums up Hegel’s account of the relations and movements among the forms of thought. If we reserve the term “history” for the real emergence of spirit from nature, the implications of this claim become graphic. As an abstract expression of the spirit, the Idea is not the bearer of logical categories independent of history.<sup>44</sup> The Idea, issuing from a thoughtful consideration of the relations and movement of form of thought, confirms that these forms of thought not only are not in isolation from one another but also are not independent of, or really prior to, the history of self-consciousness.

The spirit emerges from nature and is indissociable from barely articulable feelings, sensations, and perceptions, from theoretical frameworks, personal desires, and shared purposes. In reality we conceive ourselves as natural, personal, and public entities. Our self-conceptions may even be absolute in the sense that we venture an integrated conception of our natural, personal, and public existence. (For Hegel, such conceptions belong to the realms of art, religion, and philosophy.) These self-conceptions reach across times, uniting what we have been and are, and making concrete for us what we want and as yet are not.

This wide range of spiritualities, with their increasing complexity and concreteness, forms the subject of Hegel’s “real” philosophy. Just as the logical forms isolated by formalism may be any one of several categories of thought, so formalism may be found in investigations throughout this range of spiritualities. Studies of nature or of psychology, ethical systems, even artistic and religious conceptions may display a version of

43. See note 37 above.

44. The phrase “real emergence of spirit from nature” requires some amplification. The emergence is real in that it is preceded by a succession of natural events, i.e., events or processes that may be separately described by a philosopher of physical, chemical, and biological nature. These features are necessary conditions of the consciousness of feelings and desires that constitute the usual material of personal self-consciousness and spirituality. Yet the language of and response to feelings and desires, including the development of studies of nature, require a social self-consciousness. Consciousness of the co-development of personal and social self-consciousness, indissociable from a consciousness of nature as the temporal and spatial milieu of our existence, is *history*.



formalism's dichotomy and thereby invite skepticism about the objectivity of thinking involved in any of these endeavors. For this reason and others, Hegel's response to formalism is necessarily encyclopedic.<sup>45</sup>

Hegel, I have argued, distinguishes the philosophical investigation of the Idea of truth, namely, objective thinking, from an investigation of the reality of that truth. Nonetheless, all these investigations are philosophical; they are philosophical sciences, the common object of which is the truth, metaphysically conceived. At the same time, they are not strictly identical to that truth. Just as the study of logical forms is not to be identified with the study of human desires and perceptions, so philosophy is not to be identified with the reality it investigates.<sup>46</sup> If, however, these distinctions are to be maintained, why is the science of abstractions and forms of thinking placed at the head of Hegel's philosophical system?

Hegel, ever the pedagogue, presents the simplest and most abstract description of spiritual reality at the beginning of his philosophy. The *Science of Logic* makes this presentation as an immanent critique, a critique of any form of thinking which takes itself (or is taken) as absolute apart from the (universal and self-referential) structure of spirituality. In a similar way, in Hegel's "real" philosophy, this spiritual reality does not collapse into any isolated past or future. Rather, spirituality is that for which various times (and the various meanings of time) exist. Spirit is the purpose of time. Yet as the purpose, spirit is both the realization of time and the denial of time taken in any form of abstraction from spiritual reality.<sup>47</sup> This may also be conceived as a qualified rejection of a reduction of the human self in a state of mind (a feeling, a desire, a thought) to any isolated time. Moreover, besides feelings, desires, and the like, this spirituality may also be in the form of artistic, religious, and philosophical experience. The *Science of Logic* presents an abstract of the movement of thought characteristic of a spirituality which a natural chronos and human history alike presuppose as their end and only adequate explanation.<sup>48</sup>

In the past, Hegel's critics often confused the order of presentation

45. Also, for this reason I have refrained from any but the most general accounts of the spirituality which, I argue, is the real foundation of Hegel's *Science of Logic*. For this spirituality is not any one form of self-consciousness, self-expression, or self-determination any more than it is simply the logical Idea. The encyclopedic character of Hegel's response to formalism makes any accurate judgment of his philosophical sciences an exceedingly difficult affair. Every part of the system must be investigated in its own right. In each case, one must inquire whether, in his effort to refute formalist accounts of these realities, Hegel has reinstituted the arbitrary dogmatism of a formalist method.

46. Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 39.

47. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 526f. (HPS, 489).

48. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 524f. (HPS, 487): "In dem *Begriffe*, der sich als Begriff weiß, treten hiemit die *Momente* früher auf, als das *erfüllte Ganze*, dessen Werden die Be-

with the order of explanation in his philosophy. Although occupying the first part of Hegel's system, the *Science of Logic* does not investigate something temporally prior to what is investigated in Hegel's philosophies of nature and of spirit. Time, in fact, is a category that Hegel only begins to develop explicitly in his philosophy of nature.<sup>49</sup> The science of logic has as its content or subject matter the formal categories of thinking that belong to a spirit, conscious of its emergence from nature and its long trek toward self-determination.<sup>50</sup>

To some orthodox Hegelian ears, this interpretation may sound heretical since it implies that the *Science of Logic* is by itself incomplete in a very basic sense. But it is heresy only if one fails to distinguish the logical justification within that science from the real justification of that science. As the "adequate" or second-order concept, the Idea expresses the self-predication implied by thought's universality and negativity. Yet the Idea is only an expression ("the realm of shadows") and not the reality of such thinking.<sup>51</sup> The reality is a spirit and, at its apex, a philosophic spirit: the Ideal, complete, and self-conscious unity of the individual and society (subjective and objective spirit), nature and mind. For this same reason, the "Idea" has significance only in the minds of readers of the *Science of Logic*, i.e., human minds, not disembodied concepts. This is perhaps the final truth of the *Science of Logic*, that its real foundation, viewed from the science of logic itself, can be conceived only through a study of nature as a real condition of the spiritual. For, in reality, spirituality is emergent, a timely event in nature. As Hegel himself emphasizes, the *science* does not appear in time and in actuality before the *spirit* has come to consciousness of itself.<sup>52</sup>

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wegung jener Momente ist. In dem *Bewußtsein* dagegen ist das Ganze, aber unbegriffene, früher als die Momente.—Die *Zeit* ist der *Begriff* selbst, der *da* ist, und als leere Anschauung sich dem Bewusstsein vorstellt; deswegen erscheint der Geist notwendig in der *Zeit*, und er erscheint so lange in der *Zeit* als er nicht seinen reinen Begriff *erfaßt*, das heißt, nicht die *Zeit* tilgt. . . . Die *Zeit* erscheint daher als das Schicksal und die Notwendigkeit des Geistes, der nicht in sich vollendet ist."

49. As the text in the foregoing footnote indicates, Hegel construes time as the existing concept and presumes that the concept and negativity can be conceived independently of this existence or, better, of the contingent, historical particularity of this existence. Nevertheless, contrary to Hegel's own view of the matter here, it could be argued that the science of logic or, more precisely, the movement of concepts by way of negation in the science presupposes the notion, again showing the shifting order of explanation and presentation.

50. This interpretation of the relation of the logic to the *Realphilosophie* explains Hegel's remark about understanding more of the logic, the more one has learned elsewhere; see Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 42 (*HSL*, 58).

51. *Ibid.*: "Das System der Logik ist das Reich der Schatten, die Welt der einfachen Wesenheiten, von aller sinnlicher Konkretion befreit."

52. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 523 (*HPS*, 486): "Was aber das *Dasein* dieses betrifft, so erscheint in der *Zeit* unter Wirklichkeit die *Wissenschaft* nicht eher, als bis der Geist zu diesem Bewußtsein über sich gekommen ist."

## Chapter 8

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### MUTUAL NEED AND FRUSTRATION Hegel on the Religious Legacy of Modern Philosophy

Hegel's conception of philosophy is often looked upon as an important, if not always welcome, catalyst of philosophy's modern development. Depending upon one's own philosophical predilections, Hegel's philosophy retarded or advanced philosophical reflection, but always in the course of being rejected itself.<sup>1</sup> For some the pretentious compass and rigidity of an encyclopedic system present the greatest difficulties. For others the arguments for the integrity of a spirituality that encompasses nature, history, and/or society are particularly unconvincing, resembling thinly veiled apologetics if they deserve to be called arguments at all.

Whatever the particular misgivings with Hegel's philosophy, however, a majority of modern thinkers repudiate one thesis of Hegel's philosophy in particular, viz., the thesis that religious faith and the metaphysics of a philosophical system are mutually accountable. According to this thesis, philosophy and religion in their own respective ways need and explain one another. Rejecting this view, positivists place religious faith outside the domain of meaningful discourse while many who eschew positivist systems locate religious faith in the indeterminate gamut of one language game among others. Marxists (and Freudians) consider religious faith an ideological sedative and even religious existential-

1. Thus in Habermas's attempt to chart the development of the modern positivist mentality, rejection of Hegel's philosophy forms the starting point of that movement. See Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), chap. 1. For a similar claim see Rüdiger Bubner, *Modern German Philosophy*, trans. Eric Matthews (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 3. Despite their great diversity, the modern traditions spawned by Russell and Moore, Reichenbach and Dewey, and Kierkegaard and Marx share a common repugnance for the speculative sweep of Hegel's philosophical sciences.

ists insist that religious faith is a matter of choice, a leap that is only hindered by the weight of a metaphysical system.

In the following study it is not my purpose to explain why these various strands of the modern mentality reject Hegel's view of the relation of philosophy and religion. However, an insight into the character of contemporary philosophical culture can perhaps be gleaned from a clear perception of what so-called modern and post-modern thinkers uniformly reject. Indeed, Hegel argues his thesis systematically and historically and both foci provide important clues, not only to today's widespread rejection of that mutual accountability, but also to the contemporary state of philosophy itself.

Feuerbach and Marx are often credited with fashioning a religious model of ideology and then applying that model to philosophies (including Hegel's). Yet it is Hegel who puts such a model to devastating use in his assessment of philosophies that do not fulfill religion's need of philosophy but simply replicate religion in secular fashion. Hegel's historical argument for the mutual accountability of religion and philosophy is based on a critical account of a religious model of cognition within modern philosophy that he traces to Descartes.<sup>2</sup>

The first part of this study presents Hegel's systematic account of the different ways in which philosophy and religion respectively need each other. In the second part of the paper the focus shifts to Hegel's account of the underlying religious legacy of modern philosophy, namely, the Reformation, and its reverberations in Descartes' inception of modern philosophy. The point of the account is to advance the following central thesis. Modern philosophy progresses by giving distinctively philosophic

2. Curiously, scholars often overlook this theme, which is interwoven with Hegel's views on religion, philosophy, and history. Some have duly recognized the role of the Lutheran Reformation in Hegel's own thinking. See Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, trans. David E. Green (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1967), 32f. Identifying the spirit of Hegel and Kierkegaard, Stephen Crites rightly emphasizes the self-conscious dependence of Hegel's own philosophical perspective on his "Lutheranism," viewed as "the modern Protestant culture in which as he [Hegel] sees it, the Christian religion and the secular order have so permeated one another as to be indistinguishable." See Stephen Crites, *In the Twilight of Christendom: Hegel v. Kierkegaard on Faith and History* (Chalmersburg, Pa.: American Academy of Religion, 1972), 51. In this regard Crites echoes a theme, not only of Löwith, but also of Fackenheim: "For if for Hegel the truth of Spirit is already disclosed in life the disclosure is found—or found decisively—in *religious* life, reaching its fullness in modern Protestant Christianity." See Emil Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), 22. See also *ibid.*, 212. Yet none of these scholars attempts to explain how, in Hegel's view, the Lutheran Reformation set the stage for modern philosophy and its distinctive cognitive model, beginning with the Catholic Descartes. In fact, Stanley Rosen suggests that implicit atheism and "revolution against Christianity" characterize the tradition initiated by Descartes, in stark contrast to Hegel's attempt to preserve the wisdom of the ancients. See Stanley Rosen, *G. W. F. Hegel: An Introduction to the Science of Wisdom* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1974), 7–11.

expression to a religious legacy in the age of Reformation. Yet modern philosophy stumbles precisely by not maintaining its integrity opposite religion. This collapse of modern philosophy into its religious foundation occurs on an epistemological level where philosophy reverts to the immediacy of belief and intuition and to the formal authority of a traditional understanding.

## Philosophy and Religion: A Précis of Their Systematic Connection

In the abstract terms of Hegel's system, religion and philosophy have a common content, viz., an absolute and a human relation to what is absolute. In philosophy the content is in the form of thinking, while religion displays its content in the form of representational or symbolic understanding and in the form of devotion.<sup>3</sup>

### *Religion's Need for Philosophy*

The mutual accountability holding between religion and philosophy is grounded in the fact that they are alike forms of the human spirit and thus exist within a history of a human community. We can begin to appreciate how, in Hegel's view, religion both needs and is a prerequisite for philosophy, by unpacking how he conceives religious symbolic understanding and devotion as together comprising a form of spirituality.

*Religious Understanding and Religious Devotion* For the genuine believer and practitioner of a faith, the individual's religion in some way expresses the profoundest sense of oneself. This sense of oneself is so fused with one's sense of God or what is absolute that the very feeling seems to have an absolute character as though it be itself a unique, transcendent, and divine creation. This fusion of self-awareness and awareness of God within a religious feeling is the hallmark of what Hegel has in mind when he speaks of the religious form of spirituality. The simplest forms of this religious self-awareness and spiritual feeling are devotion and prayer.

Even in this most elementary form, however, the self-awareness in religion displays both a communal character and a reliance on the memory and the past, essential ingredients to what Hegel calls "understanding."<sup>4</sup>

3. Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 42, 46–47, 167, 288. *Enzyklopädie*, §573, *Zusatz*, 555–69 (*HPM*, 302–13).

4. Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 46f.; Fackenheim, *Religious Dimen-*

Religion, with the help of art, gives and develops communal expression for the absolute, an expression (like the absolute itself) formative of that initial, interior, and quite individual feeling of who one is. Thus an individual's religious experience and knowledge of God involve private feelings having public expression. This expression is in the form of representation.

A representation is both a re-presentation and a symbol, exhibiting some content anew within an individual consciousness and, in the process, representing that content across a time. "As the remembered and internalized intuition [*erinnerte Anschauung*], a representation is the middle between the immediate way that the intellect finds itself determined and the same intellect in its freedom, thinking."<sup>5</sup> Representations thus initiate the internalization, the process of intuiting or observing oneself, that ultimately leads to—indeed, is already incipiently—self-expression and self-externalization. Representations mediate in this way, too, thanks to their equally incipient symbolic character, something that is shared with others generally (since the same psychological structure is in place) and shared, more selectively, with those who happen to have the same sorts of intuitions (observations, experiences). At the same time, however, a representation is a private psychological experience, beholden to intuitions for its content, a content that it re-presents, in both temporal and spatial senses of the term (as "after" or "next to" another).

The specifically religious *Vorstellung* places something in front of (*vor*) us in terms of what has been placed there before (*vor-her*). The reference to placing before us points to representation's spatial constraints, while the reference to what has been placed there before points to temporal constraints, in short, a memory, one's own and/or others.<sup>6</sup> Self-awareness through religious symbol accordingly expresses a community's shared self-awareness at a definite place and stage in its history and does so in an understandable form. That is, religion makes itself under-

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sion, 122: "Just as feeling must be inwardly bound up with representation to be religious, so representation must be bound up with feeling to be religious."

5. *Enzyklopädie*, §451, 445f. (*HPM*, 201ff.). The German word translated as "representation" here is *Vorstellung* (literally, "placing before"), and it expresses in ways not captured by the English word a family of meanings Hegel brings to bear on his account of the role of representations in religious self-awareness. The content of a *Vorstellung* is sensory, but a remembered and internalized content, i.e., something privately experienced by a subject and, indeed, privately experienced as "after or next to" something else. At the same time, however, as remembered, the representation also entails, in Hegel's words, an instance of "intuiting oneself in oneself," and thereby forms the bridge (*die Mitte*) to thinking. This interpretation of *Vorstellung* is quite different from the pivotal sense of presentations (*Vorstellungen*) in the thought of Brentano and Husserl.

6. *Enzyklopädie*, §20, 63f. (*HL*, 30). See also M. Clark, *Logic and System: A Study of the Transition from "Vorstellung" to Thought in the Philosophy of Hegel* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971).

stood in artistic symbols or parables which signify or picture the spirit by re-presenting what has already been felt in the community. When someone says “I understand,” it typically means that a speaker or writer places before him what he has experienced or, on the basis of experience, can envision as capable of being experienced, in short, what he can represent to himself—or “imagine,” as we might also translate *sich vorstellen*—on the basis of his experiences. The speaker represents what is customary, what the hearer is well acquainted with in his daily perceptions and activities. To fail to understand is simply to fail to find, in one’s memory, the proper match in the past for something currently placed before one.<sup>7</sup>

Yet representations display their symbolic power by virtue ultimately of an individual subject as the locus of their order and the source of their representativeness. This same characteristic carries over into the understanding which accepts or rejects what is placed before it on the grounds of its ordering of representations. Accepting Kant’s characterization of understanding as the power of representation, Hegel specifically distinguishes *Vorstellung* from *Verstand* by attributing to the latter the reflection of relations such as universality and particularity, cause and effect, and the like among representations.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, while these reflections are in a sense a negation of representations’ direct and reflex-like, communally determined replication of the past, these determinations remain bound to or retain their validity in the representations of a private subject with private interests and private acts.<sup>9</sup> In this way Hegel ties his analysis of understanding as a power of representing to his analysis of representation and its constraints.

What this means for the religious expression of the spirit, when expressed in the form of understanding, is that both the absolute and the conscious subject are conceived on the model of a representation, i.e., treated as objects after or next to one another, relative to some finite subjectivity. A metaphysics of custom or “positivity,” as the young Hegel dubbed it, dominates the scene as something is understood only when it represents what is over—or dead.<sup>10</sup> In this manner, the very power constitutive of religious self-consciousness, the absolute, is nonetheless represented as something alien—in a temporal or spatial sense—to liv-

7. Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 48–51; *Enzyklopädie*, §9, 49 (*HL*, 13), and §80, 118 (*HL*, 113).

8. *Enzyklopädie*, §20, 63f. (*HL*, 30); Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 52.

9. Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 48. Moreover, though this individual certification is itself a communal heritage, the subject too is re-presented and, no less than the content of other representations, separate and outside-another.

10. *Ibid.*, 50: “Ob etwas verstanden werde oder nicht . . . hängt davon ab, ob es in der Gestalt seiner angewohnten Metaphysik als dasselbe kommt.”



ing human beings, yet commanding their unqualified submission. Thus, this side of religion ultimately betrays the intimate feeling of the spirit, the unity of the religious experience in devotion (including the unity among the individuals themselves) which led to its expression. Hegel has in mind explicitly those creeds which locate human beings' inherent sinfulness and salvation in past events and establish these claims in a dogmatic theology.

Religious devotion (*Andacht*) and the cult, on the other hand, express a sense of the inadequacy of dogmatic understanding. "Devotion" signifies the initial religious feeling of oneness with God, while "cult" stands for communal practices of preserving and recovering that unity. Thus this side of religion often finds itself at odds with a religious understanding. Devotion and cult overcome the human alienation from the absolute precisely by denying religious understanding's exclusive location of salvation in a past and in the positive authority of a church.<sup>11</sup>

*Religion's Inner Contradiction and Reconciliation in Philosophy* There are often competing, even contradictory voices within a religious tradition, each of which views the other as sowing the seeds of the irreligious pride epitomized by philosophy. Thus, many a devoutly religious soul sees philosophy as an extension of a religious understanding lost in representations, gradually forgetting the absolute, and preparing for a skeptical atheism. Religious understanding, viewing the freedom of inner conviction in thought or devotion as potentially arbitrary, argues for the acceptance of positive church authority. These conflicting sides of religion constitute a kind of religious model of cognition. For reasons similar to those underlying their mutual opposition, each side of this religious model considers philosophy inimical to religion.

In Hegel's view, this connection of philosophy with each side of religion is no accident. Like the devotional side of religion, philosophy is opposed to a solely symbolic understanding which transforms the truth into an unreachable goal and demands a meek submission to positive authority.<sup>12</sup> Yet philosophy is just as opposed to any attempt by a devout

11. *Enzyklopädie*, §565, 551 (*HPM*, 299): "Der absolute Geist in der aufgehobenen Unmittelbarkeit und Sinnlichkeit der Gestalt und des Wissens ist dem Inhalte nach der an und für sich seiende Geist der Natur und des Geistes, der Form nach ist er zunächst für das subjektive Wissen der *Vorstellung*. Diese gibt den Momenten seines Inhalts einerseits Selbständigkeit und macht sie gegen einander zu Voraussetzungen und *aufeinander folgenden* Erscheinungen und zu einem Zusammenhang des *Geschehens* nach *endlichen Reflexionsbestimmungen*; andererseits wird solche Form endlicher Vorstellungsweise in dem Glauben an dem einen Geist und in der Andacht des Kultus aufgehoben." See also *Enzyklopädie*, Preface to the second edition, 12f.; Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 42f., 167; Fackenheim, *Religious Dimension*, 120–24.

12. Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 57.



spirit to fashion a mythical unity with God, i.e. a unity in something other than its distinctively human form—the form of thinking.<sup>13</sup> The truth that is philosophy's object must sustain the self-discipline and communicability of thought aspired to by religious understanding but also the oneness and completeness experienced in religious devotion.

Howsoever they be directed at philosophy as a one-sided development of one aspect of religion, the valid criticisms made by each side of religion against the other are in fact philosophic insights. Far from being opposed to religion, philosophy in the Hegelian scheme is needed to complete both sides of the religious act by developing the self-criticism inherent in their mutual antagonism. Philosophy, as Hegel puts it, is "the rebirth of the spirit" emergent from the vain one-sidedness of either a purely symbolic understanding or a thought-less piety.<sup>14</sup>

Philosophy for Hegel accomplishes what religion can only point to and make barely conscious in the human being, namely, a human reconciliation with the infinite. Philosophy accomplishes the reconciliation of finite and infinite precisely by overcoming religion's contradictions. Philosophy alone construes the spirit in its proper form, the form of thinking, which is at the same time the mark of humanity. Philosophy expresses in human form the unity of devotion and the cult without submitting the freedom of thought to the positivity of religion. Hegel accordingly refers to philosophy as both "an ever-enduring divine service [*Gottesdienst*]" and "the worldly wisdom" that, without suppressing subjective freedom, finds in thought the content of religion and worldly reality alike.<sup>15</sup>

Hegel's firm conviction about the primacy of human freedom involved in the integrity of thinking underlies this assessment of religion's need of philosophy. Insofar as a symbolic understanding via the mechanism of re-presentations finds intelligibility solely in what can be construed as something sensory, bygone, and conforming to church authority, and insofar as the religious experience of unity in devotion is devoid of rational reflection, the factors that determine the truth in either per-

13. Ibid.: "In dem Unterschiede, der zwischen dem Mythos und zwischen seiner Bedeutung gemacht wird, und darin, daß die mythische Darstellung, die Darstellung der Idee für die natürliche Vorstellung, als eine Verhüllung dieser Idee betrachtet wird, liegt das Eingeständnis, daß die Bedeutung der eigentliche Gehalt, und dieser Gehalt nur in seiner wahrhaften Weise ist, insofern er der sinnlichen Gestaltung und endlichen Verhältnisse entkleidet und in der Weise des Gedankens herausgehoben wird."

14. *Enzyklopädie*, Vorrede zur zweiten Ausgabe, 14f.; see Rosen, *G. W. F. Hegel*, 22, 43–46.

15. Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 169: "Die Philosophie beschäftigt sich mit dem Wahrhaften, bestimmter ausgedrückt mit Gott; sie ist ein immerwährender Gottesdienst." Ibid., 205: "Das Göttliche muß in Weltlichen dargestellt sein, doch so, daß die subjektive Freiheit nicht unterdrückt ist. Insofern muß die Philosophie Weltweisheit genannt werden."

spective remain solely matters of belief. As such they allegedly have immediate certainty but also allegedly lie beyond and overdetermine the compass of human thought and freedom.

From this vantage point, religion's need of philosophy can be described as a humanizing and liberating need. Philosophy's emphatic effort to think the absolute provides a check on those dogmatic and sentimental tendencies in religion which may undermine human rationality and human freedom. Philosophy thereby confirms the solid foundation of the religious enterprise, that the human being's full independence of thought and freedom of action most fully assures the human being's relation to God.

### *Philosophy's Need for Religion*

Yet while both the negation and completion of religion, philosophy also stands in need of religion. The need here is an existential need in the sense that, as Hegel puts it, "philosophy cannot even exist without religion."<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, although it requires philosophy if it is to avoid self-defeating internal contradiction, religion can indeed exist without philosophy.

Philosophy presupposes religion in both its forms. The unity of religious experience and its communal character are requirements for a philosophical reflection that would hope to get beyond the self-defeating formalism engendered by an exclusively symbolic understanding.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, Hegel describes representations, the essential ingredients to this sort of understanding, as "metaphors of thought."<sup>18</sup> Philosophy may be described as the task of substituting thoughts for representations or metaphors of religion. Adding one more wrinkle to the *Vor-stellung* word play, representations are placed in front of us before (*be-vor*) thoughts are worked out. Philosophy has no pre-supposition-less beginning insofar as it is an act of spirit, a spirit existing in human time and manifesting a variety of self-expressions in addition to philosophy. In other words, philosophy has an epistemic need of the religious object. The philosophic mind which comes to think the spirit presupposes temporally and logically some acquaintance with the absolute as represented by religion.<sup>19</sup>

Among all the forms of the spirit's self-expression, religion's special

16. *Enzyklopädie*, Vorrede zur zweiten Ausgabe, 14; see Rosen, *G. W. F. Hegel*, 22, 43–46.

17. Devotion, Hegel notes, is a "thinking toward" (*Hin-denken*) and even contains in German the word for thought, i.e., "*An-dacht*." For a discussion of Hegel's opposition to the formalist legacy in philosophy, see the preceding essay in this volume, "Hegel's Science of Logic and Idea of Truth."

18. *Enzyklopädie*, §3, 42 (*HL*, 6f.).

19. *Enzyklopädie*, §1, 39 (*HL*, 3).

significance for philosophy is that of self-consciously providing a representation of the absolute in terms of the ordinary perceptions and interests of the human community at a definite stage in its history. As Hegel puts it, religion is the sort of consciousness of the truth “for human beings of every culture.”<sup>20</sup> Before mid-twentieth-century squabbles over ordinary and formal languages, Hegel recognizes the narrow sphere of discourse in scientific knowing and how much discourse has its base of translatability and intelligibility in the language and content of an entire culture. Accordingly, the first condition for properly grasping an age of philosophy is “the cultivated knowledge of the thought-relations,” i.e., a recognition of “the culture or formation of the subjective thinking.”<sup>21</sup> In this respect just as religious representation precedes philosophical thought in general, so a particular expression of the spirit at a certain stage of human culture is the key to that culture and to the intelligibility of philosophy born of that culture.<sup>22</sup>

## The Religious Legacy Informing Modern Philosophy

From a systematic perspective philosophy has an existential and epistemic need of religion, while religion has a human and liberating need of philosophy. However, Hegel argues for this mutual accountability from a historical perspective as well. Indeed, he attempts to articulate the religious perspective presupposed by philosophies in the modern age, and to evaluate those philosophies’ degrees of success at humanizing and liberating religion.

### *The Equivalence of Truth and Freedom: “The Essential Content of the Reformation”*

The religious culture serving as the presupposition of modern philosophy is what Hegel designates the “protestant principle, that in Chris-

20. *Enzyklopädie*, Vorrede zur zweiten Ausgabe, 13; *Einleitung*, 102.

21. *Enzyklopädie*, Vorrede zur zweiten Ausgabe, 13.

22. Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 290: “Das Ziel der Philosophie ist selbst dann dieses, in sich den Geist, sein Wesen in seiner Tiefe zu fassen und in Harmonie sich zu finden mit der Tiefe, die die Religion in sich enthält. Die Geschichte, die die Entzweiung vorstellt, muß für uns, die wir den Begriff haben, das zeigen, was die Geschichte noch nicht ist, nämlich erstens, daß beide Prinzipien, Eines sind, zweitens, daß selbst in der Entzweiung beider nur ein Prinzip zu Grunde liegt da der Begriff in Einem wurzelt. Drittens muß die philosophische Geschichte den Gang der Versöhnung zeigen, das Hinführen zu dem Bewußtsein ihrer Einheit,—daß beide sich erkennen als dasselbe enthaltend.” There remains the issue of the sustainability of this relationship between religion and philosophy in the wake of Hegel’s philosophy. One way to pinpoint the issue is to ask what role devotion serves in a world where the relation to the absolute is mediated

tianity the interiority in general comes to consciousness as thinking, as something to which everyone has a claim; indeed thinking is everyone's duty, that on which everything is based."<sup>23</sup> Protestantism, for Hegel, thus brings the devotional side of religion from a state of dumb feelings to a personal, self-determining thinking opposed to positivity of any kind. The split between Catholicism and Protestantism does not merely echo the conflict in religion in general but, with the Reformation, produces a new *religious* attempt to overcome the split between religious mind and body.

The Reformation emerged from the medieval church's own corruption but, Hegel insists, this was no accident. Usually corruption is understood as a human failing, a contingent "misuse" of power and position by runaway passions. Hegel does not deny that certain evils of the medieval church were contingent, due to individuals' misuse of power and position. However, the corruption Hegel has in mind, the corruption which produced the Reformation, was supposedly endemic to the medieval church as a whole.

The corruption of the church has developed out of itself; it has its principle precisely in this, that the this [the individual] finds itself as something sensory within it [the church]; that the external as such finds itself within it [the church] itself.<sup>24</sup>

While I cannot be sure what Hegel intends by the term "this" in the preceding passage, probably he is referring to God's presence for the Catholic faith in the individual, sensible host and the way generally that external matters (from the sensory bread and wine to the images and sculptures, from the pageant and ceremony of the rituals to the pomp and power of the hierarchy) and not merely the interior life of faith alone have a central significance within the church. He may also be alluding more generally to the way of becoming conscious of an individual in the intellectual culture dominated by that faith. Hegel seems to be implying that the credo of the medieval church reflects an epistemology in which the individual can be sensed but not thought.

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through thinking, as Hegel conceives thinking. I am grateful to Tim Brownlee for focusing this issue for me.

23. Hegel, *Werke*, XX, 120: "In dieser neuen Periode ist das Prinzip das Denken, das von sich ausgehende Denken—diese Innerlichkeit, die überhaupt in Rücksicht auf das Christentum aufgezeigt und die das protestantische Prinzip ist. Das allgemeine Prinzip ist jetzt, die Innerlichkeit als solche festzuhalten, die tote Aeußerlichkeit, Autorität zurückzusetzen, für ungehörig anzusehen . . . und dies Prinzip fängt mit Descartes an."

24. *Philosophie der Geschichte*, 520: "Das Verderben [der] Kirche hat sich aus ihr selbst entwickelt; es hat eben sein Prinzip darin, daß das *Dieses* als ein Sinnliches in ihr, daß das Aeußerliche, als ein solches, innerhalb ihrer selbst sich befindet." See, too, Hegel, *Vorlesungen*, vol. 12, 486f., 496f.

Negating the power of the mind and spirit, this principle that what is individual can only be sensed (and that something external to thinking must dictate to it) is the principle of negation, or the evil, inherent in the medieval church. The vices of the church are just so many manifestations of this principle. For to place reality in the sensory domain as such, and ultimately outside thought, is to place it outside one's self in some sensory thing. This denial of thought and this indebtedness to the sensory domain and to the past serve as a classic instance of the positivity that accompanies religion's purely symbolic understanding. A superstitious faith and a blind obedience to church authority alone supply moral and scientific criteria in this religious formalism.<sup>25</sup> At the same time the virtue of the church is no less affected by the same principle. Virtue is directed against sensuousness, but only abstractly, since it is unknown—and unknowable—how to be moral in the sensuous condition that defines human being. After all, what is is not what ought to be, and what is is sensory. The effect is a virtue that flees and denies the sensuous condition of humanity.

Under this corruptive principle, the vice and virtue of the medieval church bear witness to the inner conflict Hegel considers intrinsic to religion. The development of these two sides of the medieval church and of their opposition produces the Reformation. On the one hand, through the devotional practice of virtue, human beings recognize their subjective power, their ability to oppose themselves to the external, sensory world, their freedom as the capacity for self-determination. On the other hand,

The *delivery from sins*, the highest liberation which the soul seeks, to be certain of its oneness with God, this deepest, innermost thing is offered to human beings in the most external, most frivolous manner—namely to be *purchased with mere money*, and at the same time this occurs for the most external purposes—luxury.<sup>26</sup>

According to Hegel, the change that this contradiction within the church brings about is most effectively articulated by a Catholic monk, Martin Luther. Luther opposes himself to the medieval church by denying its basic principle or, in other words, by affirming that the individual is spiritual and intellectual and that the spirit subsumes all that is sensible and external.

25. *Philosophie der Geschichte*, 520f.; 531.

26. *Ibid.*, 521: "Der *Ablaß der Sünden*, die höchste Befriedigung, welche die Seele sucht, ihrer Einigkeit mit Gott gewiß zu sein, das Tiefste, Innerste wird dem Menschen nur die äußerlichste, leichtsinnigste Weise geboten,—nämlich mit *blossem Gelde zu kaufen*, und zugleich geschieht dieses für die äußerlichsten Zwecke—der Schwelgerei." See, too, Hegel, *Vorlesungen*, vol. 12, 498.

Luther's simple teaching is that the this, the infinite subjectivity, i.e., the effectively true spirituality, Christ, is in no way present and actual in an external fashion, but as the spiritual in general is reached only in reconciliation with God—in *belief and in enjoyment*. These two words say everything. It is not the consciousness of a sensory thing as of God, nor even of something represented merely, which is not actual and present, but on the contrary of something actual, which is not sensory.<sup>27</sup>

No sensory thing, be it the host or the historic fact of a crucifixion or resurrection, is the basis of belief. When Hegel remarks "we Lutherans believe better," he is comparing Lutheran belief to one dependent on a present sense experience or on an event in the past, dependencies which supposedly deny the individual a free and active role in her reconciliation with the divine.<sup>28</sup>

Among the wide and abiding influences worked by Luther's Reformation the increasing dissolution of the class distinction between priests and laity signals in an external way the central significance of the Reformation for modern philosophizing. Just as no class is to be above another by virtue of its celibacy or to be in possession of the church's temporal possessions, so no particular class has an exclusive claim to the truth. Rather truth belongs to

the sensitive spirituality of human beings, which can and should come into possession of the truth, and this subjectivity is that of all human beings. Each person has to complete the work of reconciliation in himself.<sup>29</sup>

The chief means by which Luther effected this result, which made the whole authority of the church problematic, was his translation of the Bible into German. As the foundation of the Lutheran church, the Bible was opposed to previous church authority and, with its availability to all,

27. *Philosophie der Geschichte*, 522: "Luthers einfache Lehre ist, daß das *Dieses*, die unendliche Subjektivität, d.i. die wahrhafte Geistigkeit, Christus, auf keine Art in äußerlicher Weise gegenwärtig und wirklich ist, sondern als Geistiges überhaupt nur in der Versöhnung mit Gott erlangt wird—im *Glauben und im Genusse*. Diese zwei Worte sagen Alles. Es ist nicht das Bewußtsein eines sinnlichen Dinges als des Gottes, noch auch eines bloß Vorgestellten, das nicht wirklich und gegenwärtig ist, sondern von einem Wirklichen, das nicht sinnlich ist." See, too, Hegel, *Vorlesungen*, vol. 12, 499.

28. Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 177f.

29. *Philosophie der Geschichte*, 523: "Indem das Individuum nun weiß, daß es mit dem göttlichen Geist erfüllt ist, so fallen damit alle Verhältnisse der Aeufferlichkeit weg; es giebt jetzt keinen Unterschied mehr zwischen Priester und Laien, es ist nicht eine Klasse ausschließlich im Besitz des Inhalts der Wahrheit, wie aller geistigen und zeitlichen Schätze der Kirche; sondern es ist das Herz, die empfindende Geistigkeit des Menschen, die in den Besitz der Wahrheit kommen kann und kommen soll, und diese Subjektivität ist die *aller Menschen*. Jeder hat an sich selbst das Werk der Versöhnung zu vollbringen." See Hegel, *Vorlesungen*, vol. 12, 500.

it became clear that "everyone should be able now to teach himself from it, to determine his conscience from it."<sup>30</sup>

The ability and responsibility of each human being to determine the truth for himself is the Reformation's legacy, the legacy of the "free spirit," to modern philosophy. Drawing religion and philosophy closer together, the cultural heritage of the Lutheran Reformation is the triumph of the subjectivity of devotion over the religious understanding.

The subjectivity now makes the objective content its own, i.e., makes the teaching of the church its own. In the Lutheran church the subjectivity and certainty of the individual is just as necessary as the objectivity of the truth. The truth is for the Lutheran not an object already made, but on the contrary the subject itself should become something effectively true in that it gives up its particular content in the face of the substantial truth and itself makes this truth its own. Thus the subjective spirit becomes free in the truth, denies its particularity, and comes to itself in its truth. . . . This is the essential content of the Reformation. The human being has determined through himself to be free.<sup>31</sup>

If Hegel views philosophy as the completion of religion in general, he views modern philosophy as the completion of religion in the age of Reformation, the renewal and confirmation of the religious legacy of the Reformation. The conflict inherent in religion in general carries over into the new religious age and develops anew the antagonism between philosophy and a particular side of the religious form. Nevertheless, the presupposition for reconciliation, reconciliation of the conflict within religion and thus reconciliation of philosophy and religion, is given in this "essential content of the Reformation."

### *The Self-Sufficiency of Reflection: Protestantism in Cartesian Guise*

In the introduction to the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences* the principle of modern philosophy is described as the principle of the self-sufficiency of reflection, thus echoing what in his lectures on the philosophy of history Hegel calls the "essential content of the Reformation."

30. *Philosophie der Geschichte*, 525; see Hegel, *Vorlesungen*, vol. 12, 500.

31. *Philosophie der Geschichte*, 523f.: "Die Subjektivität macht sich nun den objektiven Inhalt, d.h. die Lehre der Kirche zu eigen. In der lutherischen Kirche ist die Subjektivität und Gewißheit des Individuums ebenso notwendig als die Objektivität der Wahrheit. Die Wahrheit ist den Lutheranern nicht ein gemachter Gegenstand, sondern das Subjekt selbst soll ein wahrhaftes werden, indem es seinen particularen Inhalt gegen die substantielle Wahrheit aufgibt und sich dies Wahrheit frei, negiert seine Particularität und kommt zu sich selbst in seiner Wahrheit. . . . Dieses ist der wesentliche Inhalt der Reformation; der Mensch ist durch sich selbst bestimmt frei zu sein." See also Hegel, *Vorlesungen*, vol. 12, 501, and *Enzyklopädie*, §7, 46f. (*HL*, 10f.).

Yet other factors, notably art and empirical sciences, contribute as much to the burgeoning philosophic sense of the "free spirit."<sup>32</sup> For example, natural science found its validity in experience rather than in the metaphysics of custom upheld by church authority. "A human being learned now to observe, to think for itself, and to construct for itself representations opposed to the firmly posited truths, the dogmas of the church, and even opposed to prevailing state law."<sup>33</sup> In effect, the principle of experience in the emerging natural sciences and the "essential content" of the Reformation alike form the philosophic principle of the modern tradition, the principle of the self-sufficiency of reflection.

The principle of experience contains the endlessly important determination, that for assuming and holding some content as true, the human being itself must be there, more precisely, that it find such content in unity and united with *the certainty of its very self*.<sup>34</sup>

Thus, modern reflection takes its content from its own intuitions and perceptions. What is reflected (isolated or abstracted) is that of which the individual is as certain as she is of herself.

*First Reflection and Philosophical Inquiry* However, Hegel is quick to add that this realization is only in embryonic form at the outset of the modern age—reflection is an undeveloped principle.<sup>35</sup> Hegel employs the word "*Nachdenken*" (literally, "after-thinking") to depict this principle of reflection whose self-sufficiency is just coming of age. In the modern tradition, the initial or first reflection follows after determinations have somehow come to be present in consciousness. The determinations which present themselves, constituting and directing thought, are those determinations which the individual finds to be as certain as she is of herself. Be it religious or scientific, this thinking belongs to a symbolic or re-presentational understanding of the sort which religion employs to express the absolute. The authority may no longer be that of the church, but there is still a submission to untested limits, limits de-

32. *Philosophie der Geschichte*, 524; Hegel, *Vorlesungen*, vol. 12, 501f.

33. Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 160: "Der Mensch lernte nun selbst beobachten, denken und sich Vorstellungen machen gegen die festgesetzten Wahrheiten, die Dogmen der Kirche, und ebenso gegen das geltende Staatsrecht; oder hat wenigstens neue Prinzipien für das alte Staatsrecht gesucht, um es nach diesen Prinzipien zu berichtigen."

34. *Enzyklopädie*, §7, 46 (*HL*, 10f.): "Das Prinzip der *Erfahrung* enthält die unendlich wichtige Bestimmung, daß für das Annehmen und Fürwahrhalten eines Inhalts der Mensch selbst *dabei sein* müsse, bestimmter, daß er solchen Inhalt mit *der Gewißheit seiner selbst* in Einigkeit und vereinigt finde."

35. Hegel, *Werke*, XX, 121.



finied by the scope of an individual's security.<sup>36</sup> Hegel distinguishes this understanding or first reflection from a second reflection. The latter would be directed philosophically at the general determinations in the tradition underlying the presumed (or found) determinations of first reflection.<sup>37</sup>

The situation Hegel envisions may be described as follows. At the outset of the modern age the individual, buoyed up by the self-sufficiency of reflection in art, science, and religious inwardness, rejects authority and affirms the content of his or her own reflections. Yet perhaps swept up by the liberating emotion of the initial act of reflection, or perhaps fearful of the uncharted waters of ongoing inquiry, individuals are slow to perform a second act of reflection, one that asks why a particular content was reflected. They fail to ask why an individual comes to regard some determinations as having the very certainty the individual has of herself. Modern philosophy's degree of success can be measured by its ability to inquire into the first reflections of art and politics, science and religion. Such a philosophical inquiry is an attempt to account for the religious experience, and this very attempt makes philosophy in turn accountable to religion.

*The Cartesian Legacy* Descartes is "the effectively true beginner of modern philosophy."<sup>38</sup> At the outset of what Hegel calls "the period of thinking understanding," Descartes is Hegel's prime example of a philosopher affirming the self-sufficiency of reflection yet restricting the same to the level of first reflection and thereby undermining the mutual integrity of philosophy and religion. On the one hand, Descartes formulated the problem of truth for the modern age as well as the essentials of its solution precisely by giving philosophic expression to Luther's concept of the free spirit. On the other hand, Descartes' is a philosophy characteristic of a tradition in which philosophy and exact sciences are not distinguished. At the level of first reflection or symbolic under-

36. Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 5f.: "Der Mut der Wahrheit, der Glaube an die Macht des Geistes ist die erste Bedingung der Philosophie."

37. *Enzyklopädie*, §9, 49 (*HL*, 13).

38. Hegel, *Werke*, XX, 123: "Rene Descartes ist in der Tat der wahrhafte Anfänger der modernen Philosophie, insofern sie das Denken zum Prinzip macht." The following account is intended not so much as a set of accurate claims about Descartes' and his successors' philosophies but as an attempt to portray Hegel's assessment of them in view of his thesis about the mutual accountability of religion and philosophy. Also all quotations in this section are taken from the two main sources of Hegel's analysis of Cartesian philosophy: his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* and his discussion of "Immediate Knowing," the third posture of thinking toward objectivity in the Preliminary Concept (*Vorbegriff*) to the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*.

standing at which these sciences take place, the revolutionary nature of reflection's self-sufficiency becomes solely an abstract principle or moment of the truth.<sup>39</sup> At this point philosophy alternates between private intuitions and the symbols of scientific or religious authority. Thus the internal contradiction between understanding and devotion in a religious model of cognition is not resolved but duplicated in Descartes' philosophy and its modern legacy.

Descartes, whose influence according to Hegel cannot be overestimated, establishes "the protestant principle" as the first principle of his philosophy. This principle, viz., *de omnibus dubitandum est*, signifies a doubting, not in the sense of skepticism, "but much more the sense that one has to deny every prejudice—i.e., all presuppositions which are assumed to be as true as they are immediate—and begin from thinking, in order to come initially from thinking to something stable, to reach a pure beginning."<sup>40</sup>

Obviously, Descartes' expressed intent was to arrive at objective truth, not to give philosophic expression to some protestant ideal. Nevertheless Hegel perceives the Lutheran notion of the free spirit at the root of Descartes' philosophizing, since objectivity is to be achieved solely through "my thinking."

It is the interest of freedom which lies at the bottom; what is recognized as true should possess that rank in that our freedom is contained in it, in that we think.<sup>41</sup>

Hegel finds this underlying notion of the free spirit further evidenced in what he considers the second principle of Descartes' philosophy, viz., "the immediate certainty of thinking," Descartes' rule of accepting nothing as true that is not recognized clearly and distinctly.<sup>42</sup>

Yet this second principle also clearly exemplifies the relative self-sufficiency of a first reflection, duplicating the positivity of religious understanding in two ways. First, the self-certainty of the thinking in the cogito or "I" arrived at through doubt is supposed to be an isolated individual, i.e., the individual with her representations and intuiting herself in them. Yet, the certainty, Hegel insists, thus refers only to thinking in its immediacy or the thinking of self-consciousness in general. "I" has

39. *Enzyklopädie*, §114, *Zusatz*, 145 (*HL*, 165f.).

40. Hegel, *Werke*, XX, 127.

41. Hegel, *Werke*, XX, 129: "Es ist das Interesse der Freiheit, was zugrunde liegt; was als wahr anerkannt wird, soll die Stellung haben, daß unsere Freiheit darin erhalten ist, daß wir denken."

42. Hegel, *Werke*, XX, 130.

the significance as thinking, not as the individuality of self-consciousness."<sup>43</sup> As yet there can be no certainty of an individual, let alone one determined in spatial or temporal or sensory terms. Secondly, since this thinking is in its immediacy, the unity of thinking and being in the cogito is not an inference. In this unmediated fashion, the thinking and the being of the cogito do not have concrete content. Thus, while the identity of thinking and being in the cogito is, according to Hegel, "the most interesting idea of the modern period [and Descartes] was the first to put it forth," being and thinking nevertheless remain different and Descartes does not *establish* their identity.<sup>44</sup>

Because of its immediacy and because it serves as the beginning of his philosophy, the self-reference of thinking, even in the cogito, functions as a strictly formal principle. Hence Descartes requires a third principle, that of "the transition of this certainty to the truth."<sup>45</sup> According to this principle truth involves something other than thinking and the basis of the transition to that other is God. In his principle of clarity and distinctness, and in the self-sufficiency of thinking achieved by rigorous doubt, Descartes finds no basis for distinguishing among representations vis-à-vis external objects. As soon as I maintain or deny that an external object corresponds to a representation, I find that I can be deceived, or better, I find that there are representations involving an other which I do not think as surely as myself. Hence the question emerges for Descartes: how do I know, even in a clear and distinct representation of something other than myself, that I am not deceiving myself? The remedy is a representation of something other than myself which involves the existence of that other just as surely as that representation is thought (clearly and distinctly).

The quasi-divine character of the unity of thinking and being is similar to Hegel's own concept of absolute spirit. However, the nature of Descartes' proof of God's existence relies on the same sort of immediate knowing which characterizes Descartes' account of the cogito. For this reason, Hegel maintains, just as Descartes conceives the identity of thinking and being in the cogito abstractly and does not prove but simply affirms that identity, so, too, he fails to establish adequately the existence of God and its role in overcoming doubt.

What betrays Descartes, Hegel claims, is that same symbolic understanding functioning within religion, only now in the guise of the meth-

43. Hegel, *Werke*, XX, 130: "Ich hat die Bedeutung als Denken, nicht Einzelheit des Selbstbewußtseins."

44. Hegel, *Werke*, XX, 131-36.

45. Hegel, *Werke*, XX, 136: "Das Dritte ist der Uebergang dieser Gewißheit zur Wahrheit, zu Bestimmtem."

od of the exact sciences. The proof of God's existence is supposed to substantiate determinations about degrees of reality of metaphysical distinctions, in terms of which truth and error might be confidently determined. Yet these very determinations are presupposed in the proof and considered "immediately certain," thus replaying the opposition in religion between the intuitive unity achieved by devotion and the symbolic gap of the understanding.

That Descartes was himself aware of this is evidenced by what Hegel considers the fourth principle of Descartes' philosophy: "What is revealed to us by God, we must believe although we do not grasp it."<sup>46</sup> The individuality of the self, the existence of God, the various metaphysical distinctions and principles are all ideas Descartes finds to be as certain as himself and, at the stage of first reflection, he gives assent to his clear understanding of these ideas. There can be no second reflection, no inquiry as to why the cogito is conceived as an individual, why certain metaphysical determinations are accepted and so on, since such inquiries simply extend beyond the intelligibility provided by a clear and distinct, but nonetheless symbolic understanding.

The ambivalence and ambiguity in Descartes' philosophy, Hegel argues, are due to his persistent recognition that "self-consciousness is an essential moment of the true," while still holding that the nature of truths or essences and God's existence are distinct from his own self-certainty.<sup>47</sup> The truths perceived clearly and distinctly have their validity in the external, unchanging thinking of the same by a veracious God.

Putting the results of Hegel's analysis of Descartes' philosophy into the perspective of his thesis of religion's and philosophy's mutual accountability, it is evident that Descartes is not able to account for religion because his philosophy merely apes the cognitive model in religion. Not sufficiently distinct from religion, Descartes' philosophy resurrects its internal contradiction. This lapse of philosophy into religion is, moreover, a Cartesian legacy.

An adequate demonstration of the persistence of this particular Cartesian legacy among modern European philosophers is a monumental task, one I am not convinced even Hegel, its proponent, successfully executed. Nonetheless, a profile of that demonstration can be readily indicated. The continued emphasis on clarity and distinctness by Descartes'

46. Hegel, *Werke*, XX, 142: "Das Vierte ist nun, daß Cartesius sagt: 'Was uns von Gott geoffenbart ist, müssen wir glauben, ob wir es gleich nicht begriffen.'"

47. Hegel, *Werke*, XX, 120: "Wir kommen eigentlich jetzt erst zur Philosophie der neuen Welt und fangen diese mit Cartesius an. Mit ihm treten wir eigentlich in eine selbständige Philosophie ein, welche weiß, daß sie selbständig aus der Vernunft kommt und daß das Selbstbewußtsein wesentliches Moment des Wahren ist."

rationalist successors and their attempt to cast philosophy in the mold of a formal system are unmistakable remnants of the religious dichotomy between intuition and understanding. When Locke, reacting to the collapse of individual consciousness within these formal systems, questions the origins of clear and distinct ideas within experience, empiricist formulation is given to the protestant principle of the self-sufficiency of reflection. Viewed in relation to one another, moreover, rationalists and empiricists respectively give secular expression and emphasis to one of the mutually exclusive modes of religious knowing. Thus, the rationalist-empiricist debate may be construed as a replica, within modern philosophy, of the struggle between dogmatic and mystically minded theologians, between the competing demands of religious understanding and religious devotion.<sup>48</sup>

There was obviously a great effort expended by modern philosophers to give an account of religion and even, in some cases, to make philosophy accountable to religion. Hume's investigations of religion's natural history provide a prime instance of the former. For instances of making philosophy accountable to religion, one need only consider Descartes' continual efforts to have his philosophy accepted by Arnauld and other theologians or Leibniz's ingenious reformulation of transubstantiation, aimed at reconciling Catholicism and Protestantism. These efforts are all laudatory from Hegel's viewpoint, signaling moments of real progress in the philosophic enterprise. For in these efforts philosophy maintains a distance from religion, respecting religion's integrity and legacy while giving independent expression to the self-sufficiency of personal reflection and experience. Hegel's difficulty is not with such efforts but rather with modern philosophy's inability to free itself from the epistemic quandary inherent in the religious experience.

## Concluding Remarks

Hegel's account of Descartes' and other modern philosophies, if we can rely on his lecture notes, is sketchy, free-wheeling, and often simply unfair, as he hammers out his own philosophical theories.<sup>49</sup> Yet, despite its shortcomings, this approach makes significant strides toward clarifying and even evidencing his thesis about the mutual accountability of

48. It should be remembered that the two sides of religion emerge from a single unified religious consciousness or spirituality, as noted at the outset of the systematic account of religion. This unity is logically recovered through a demonstration of the logical equivalence (valid biconditionality) of the categories of rationalism and empiricism. The recovery is accomplished in Hegel's doctrine of essence in the *Science of Logic*.

49. See *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, trans. and ed. David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 12.

religion and a systematic and metaphysical philosophy. What this thesis means is that religion and philosophy must recognize the integrity of one another. Religion's need and explanation of philosophy is quite distinct from philosophy's manner of needing and explaining religion. This integrity is not maintained merely when philosophy makes religious experience or religious dogma a topic of investigation nor when a philosophy attempts to accommodate a religious doctrine. Rather, if Hegel is correct, a central feature of philosophy's autonomy from religion lies in its ability to free itself from the religious model of cognition which bifurcates knowing into mutually exclusive realms of private intuitions and public understanding, or of feelings and symbols. Only by fashioning its own model of cognition can philosophy satisfy religion's need of philosophy while acknowledging its own need of religion.

However, the preceding account of the mutual accountability thesis is misleading if somehow it gives the impression that philosophy exists because religion—which is *ex professo* neither a metaphysics nor an epistemology—proves to be a metaphysical or epistemological nightmare. Philosophy exists not because religion is contradictory but because philosophy must grapple with the contradictions that supposedly arise from reflection upon religion. In the end, that is to say, in an adequate philosophical treatment of religion, these contradictions prove to be unfounded. Real distinctions exist between private feelings and public expression, between intuition and its symbolic mediation, or between the spontaneity of the present and the ponderous weight of tradition and past authority. These distinctions that dominate the history of religion resurface in the history of philosophy and philosophical reflection on religion. But for Hegel these distinctions, when adequately elaborated, do not constitute a contradiction. Nor does the truth regarding these distinctions consist in collapsing either component of the respective distinction into its counterpart. What is required is a conceptual framework powerful enough to accommodate these real distinctions and the real relations they logically entail.

The articulation of such a framework is precisely the task that Hegel sets for a systematic and speculative philosophy. For philosophy to attempt anything less, e.g., to be moved by political winds or to relinquish the articulation of truth to natural science or poetry, is to weaken in a fundamental way human beings' power of understanding themselves and their world and thus of determining their own fate. Indeed, such a strategy would not only deny modern philosophy's own religious presupposition but also frustrate modern religion's need for an intellectually responsible expression of its principle of the equivalence of truth and freedom.

What does all this have to do with the modern crisis of confidence in philosophy? Perhaps that crisis of confidence is due to a loss of identity on the part of philosophy. Symptoms of this loss are dramatically evidenced by the rejection of Hegel's thesis of a mutual accountability between religion and philosophy. For precisely in its relation to religion, as Hegel conceives it, philosophy faces a telling challenge in maintaining its epistemic integrity and its identity. What the preceding paper implies is that the modern crisis of confidence in philosophy exists because philosophy has attempted to replace religion, because philosophy no longer acknowledges its need of religion or religion's need of it, and because finally philosophy cannot account for religion and fulfill religion's need of philosophy. Yet, if Hegel's analysis is correct (and herein lies a central part of *his* philosophical legacy), to maintain its accountability to religion and to itself, philosophy must attempt to elaborate both what it means to be and what it means to be responsible for being, a task that Hegel equates with systematic metaphysics.

## Chapter 9

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### THE SEXUAL BASIS OF ETHICAL LIFE Hegel's Reading of *Antigone* in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*

Only about halfway through his *Phenomenology of Spirit* does Hegel's discussion explicitly turn to spirit. His account of spirit, the "absolute, real essence," directly follows the chapter on reason, and to understand that account it is helpful, as always when dealing with this work, to look first to what it directly supersedes. For Hegel presents spirit as a stage of consciousness that builds upon what reason or, better, a stage of consciousness defined by "reason" supposedly achieves and fails to achieve.

In the chapter on reason Hegel recounts how, in the observation of nature, reasonable activity consists in looking for some immediate unity to what exists *for itself* and what exists *in itself*. In reason's naiveté, i.e., in the naiveté of someone who expects this rational unity to present itself in some direct way, the unity is determined as something which simply exists, unmediated and in itself. Physiognomy and phrenology are pseudo-sciences and yet logical conclusions to this search. At the same time the irreducibility of individual self-consciousness, aware of existing for itself, comes to present itself as something just as certain. Yet this very individuality, as something existing for itself opposed to what exists in itself, is as wrong-headed as the attempt to reduce individuals to the bumps and curves in their skulls. Reason comes to this conclusion on its own, the general truth that what is essential exists *in and for itself*.

This conclusion remains, however, only an abstract certainty, a work of reason, not of spirit. What reason indicates only in a formal, nonsubstantial way, namely, the self-conscious oneness of self and world, is realized in what Hegel calls "spirit."<sup>1</sup> "Spirit" signifies the *self* of an actual consciousness, confronting the *actual* world, yet such that neither is alien to the other. That world is the point of departure and aim of every-

1. In other words, reason is this spirit but does not know it.



one, and yet it is also their doing. Realized in many an individual, but not reducible to anyone, spirit initially takes the form of *Sittlichkeit*. This term lacks a suitable English equivalent but is typically rendered “ethical order” or “ethical life,” since the term is related to *Sitten*, the German term for customs or even an ethos, and since Hegel deliberately sets this domain off from what he takes to be the more individually oriented area of “morality” (*Moralität*).<sup>2</sup> In the *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel’s account of ethical life is the story of its rise and fall, from its inevitable conflict between family and state to its collapse into the modern world of abstract rights and legally defined persons.

This account of ethical life is based on an interpretation of sexual roles in classical Greek tragedies. In this novel hermeneutic, texts of Sophocles underpin the thesis that sexuality—at least in the archaic world—is the foundation of the ethical world and its demise. Recently the “adequacy” of this hermeneutic has come under feminist criticism, not only because Hegel’s interpretation of *Antigone* is said to “demonstrate that familial life is woman’s unique responsibility,” but also because it is purportedly an “over-simplification made to fit his view of the tragic character of pagan life.”<sup>3</sup> By not discussing Antigone’s suicide and the deliberateness of her defiance of Creon, it is argued, Hegel fails to see Antigone as a tragic female figure, transcending the traditional place of woman.<sup>4</sup>

These are weighty charges, though they rest on fairly questionable hermeneutical presuppositions themselves. One might ask, for example, what in this case constitutes an adequate interpretation? an over-simplification? To what extent, if any, should the context and nature of Hegel’s references to Antigone in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* be taken into account as mitigating factors in evaluating his interpretation? The following brief study suggests answers to these questions and a response to the charges raised above and it does so by recounting how Hegel’s reference to Antigone elaborates the thesis that ethical life is rooted in human sexuality. While this thesis, in turn, raises substantive questions unaddressed by Hegel, it also calls for a transformation of female and

2. Baillie translates *Sittlichkeit* as “ethical order” in Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 462, as does Miller in Hegel, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 266. Charles Taylor translates it “ethical life” in *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 173, while Jacob Lowenberg suggests “ethical world” for *sittliche Welt* in *Hegel’s Phenomenology* (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1965), 189.

3. Patricia Jagentowicz Mills, “Hegel’s *Antigone*,” *The Owl of Minerva* 17, no. 2 (Spring 1986): 131, 137, 140f.

4. *Ibid.*, 145ff.

male roles and thereby of ethical life itself, both ethical life as understood by Hegel and ethical life as it is lived today.

## The Ethical World

The ethical world is composed of a people and their families, representing respectively two distinct sorts of powers and laws. The people are *aware* that they form a real ethical entity, a commonwealth with its own traditions, customs, and taboos, with legislation and a government embodied in a ruler. Because this community, in which citizens are united and in some way equal, is their doing, it may be said to constitute the ethical power of the human law within the ethical world.<sup>5</sup> The state supposes what, from its point of view, is a naturally stable, yet largely unconscious existence. The natural ethical community and counterpart to the state is the family. Not the work of the commonwealth, the family embodies the divine law within the ethical world.<sup>6</sup>

Ideally, society and the family support and depend on one another, though they also represent a potential threat to each other. A society may organize itself largely for the promotion (the acquisitions, property, enjoyment) of individuals and their families. Yet if this promotion is overdone, the society is endangered as individuals, bent on their own fortunes, lack solidarity with one another. Families need society and the state, just as much as it is true that the force of the human law, the public domain of the ethical world, resides in the efficacy of the divine law in the privacy of the family.<sup>7</sup>

The idea of a naturally ethical entity is, from some familiar points of view, problematic. How can something be both natural and ethical? How can a family be considered in itself ethical? By some counts, the ethical point of view demands impartiality, yet the family is intimately individual in its outlook and concerns. Hegel concurs that, insofar as family relations are based upon love or sentiment, need or desire, these natural feelings do not make the family in itself ethical. The ethical force of society (and the deliberate necessity it attaches to the state) can have nothing to do with the contingencies of natural feelings of affection or revulsion. Of course, considered in relation to the state and not in itself, the family performs an ethical function, by submitting its naturalness and individuality to the yoke of public virtue, in effect treating fellow members not as family but as citizens. However, in itself the fam-

5. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 288f., 293.

6. *Ibid.*, 293f.

7. *Ibid.*, 297f., 303f., 314f.

ily naturally lives for individuals, not for some universal will. The question remains, then, as to how the family could act toward its members as spiritual (i.e., ethical individuals) and not merely natural entities, at the same time treating them as family members and not citizens.

The family within itself moves beyond the purely natural order, yet without identifying itself as a functionary of the public domain, only when it buries its dead. Refusing to leave the deceased to the elements, the family enshrines the dead family member as something more than a mere contingency of nature, a practice that elevates the individual in a certain sense to a universal level. This “final duty,” Hegel concludes, constitutes “the perfect divine law or the positive ethical action toward the individual,” a conclusion obviously intended to prepare the reader for the subsequent interpretation of *Antigone*.

Just as there is a special action that is ethical within the family, so is there a special relationship in which an ethical dimension surfaces in this natural community. In the family three kinds of relationships are prominent: the husband-wife, the parent-child, and the brother-sister (or sibling) relations. The relation between wife and husband comprises an immediate sort of mutual recognition (as does in a different way the relation between parent and child). These relations only prefigure an ethical relationship, without constituting one as such. The very immediacy and naturalness of feelings and desires for one another supposedly inhibit self-consciousness or, at least, a fuller disclosure of oneself to oneself. There can be recognition of oneself, but in another, a spouse or child, as well as a cognizance of being recognized as such. The natural inequalities are not overcome, but remain the staples of the respective relationships. For example, a daughter (insofar as she sees herself simply as a daughter) does not see herself positively as someone existing for itself, as someone in her own right, in the relationship with her parents. A wife and mother finds a kind of individuality, but supposedly only in natural pleasures that are joined to a sure sense of the replaceability of spouses and children.<sup>8</sup>

The relation between sisters and brothers, Hegel suggests, is the only

8. This statement is obviously sexist. Indeed, Hegel's remarks about the difference between the ethicality of wife and husband in this connection reveal, rather transparently, sexist prejudices that he shares with his era. Thus, he observes that the woman's particular pleasure is immediately, i.e., inseparably, something universal; that is to say, her concern is supposedly as much for having *a* man, *a* child, as having this particular husband or child—an observation that seems patently false as a generalization and, even if true in this or that instant, something that would hold equally for particular males. Similarly, Hegel observes that the man, in contrast to his spouse, allegedly separates himself into citizen and husband, thus divided between the general will and the particular family—as though this alienation does and, indeed, did not tragically confront women as well, as the saga of *Antigone* makes only too clear.

genuinely ethical relationship within the family. Not desiring one another sexually, having neither received their individuality from nor given it to the other, sisters and brothers can freely relate to one another.<sup>9</sup> However, at least in the traditional context that Hegel has in mind, brothers and sisters develop their special relationship in contrasting ways. While the sister remains at home, guarding the divine law, the brother takes leave of the family, making his way in the public arena of human law. Hegel does not explain why the natural differences between the sexes acquire ethical significance but neither does he, despite his sometimes sexist prejudices, claim that the sexes must acquire that significance in this way, viz., the female representing the divine law in the immediacy of a natural ethical community, the male representing the human law in the mediacy of an established ethical community. A sexist attitude is not required to maintain that, as sister and wife, a woman takes on a distinctive ethical significance, just as does the male as brother and husband.<sup>10</sup> By virtue of taking on this ethical significance, the sexes respectively “overturn” (*überwinden*) their purely natural character and divide and share the “ethical substance” (*die sittliche Substanz*) among themselves.<sup>11</sup>

The term “overturn” is more than an overstatement on Hegel’s part, however. These two entities within the ethical world each have their distinctive individuality in a “naturally differentiated self-consciousness.”<sup>12</sup> In other words, in the initial phase of spirit, the individual’s self-consciousness is a function of recognizing and being recognized by another individual in an ethical world, though an ethical world immediately defined by his or her natural state, above all, by his or her sexuality. Again, this account hardly explains why males and females have become self-conscious in the ethical world in terms of public and domestic characters respectively. Yet such an explanation is beside Hegel’s point (though he is wrong to neglect it). His overriding interest here is in illustrating how the dynamics of the ethical world emerge from the sexual difference.

Not only is ethical life rooted in the difference in gender (as con-

9. What Hegel is depicting here is neither sisterhood nor brotherhood, but rather involves a relation between sisters and brothers within a family. Nor is there anything in his account to preclude parents from relating in this way to their children, while the same holds true for relations between spouses as well. Mills’s inference (“Hegel’s *Antigone*,” 136f.) that a woman on Hegel’s account needs an actual brother is not corroborated.

10. Whether Hegel should have explained himself more clearly in this regard is another matter. In his defense, it should be remembered that the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* is a science of the experience of spirit, i.e., a speculative study of the history of the spirit’s actual appearance, and not a strictly normative account of how we ought to understand ourselves.

11. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 301: “Auf diese Weise überwinden die beiden Geschlechter ihr natürliches Wesen und treten in ihrer sittlichen Bedeutung auf, als Verschiedenheiten, welche die beiden Unterschiede, die die sittliche Substanz gibt, unter sich teilen.”

12. *Ibid.*

scious life is rooted in unconscious nature), but its development is constituted by the acquired ethical significance of males and females as individuals in the family. Society emerges from the family and remains sustained by the family even as the family supposes the state. The relation between a family and a state instantiates a relation between a divine law and a human law, respectively if contingently incorporated in the roles of females and males. Throughout this process, sexuality—embodying the unconscious, natural source of ethical life—far from being left behind, operates at every level of ethical interaction, e.g., wife and husband, individual (private) and universal (public), family and state. Sexuality gives definition to the shapes of these ethical forms. The whole is a spiral upon spirals of mutually dependent relationships, indicating ethical life in a stable setting, a dynamic equilibrium Hegel labels “the ethical world.”

The marriage union, in particular, mediates between the public and the private, the human and divine. The husband is the individualized human law, its link to the power of the divine law in the family, while the wife is the individualization of the divine law, its existence and means of emergence from the unconscious and subterranean world into the public arena.<sup>13</sup> Viewed from this perspective, there is a complementarity to ethical life, built upon the natural beauty of the concordance of the sexes in marriage.

## The Ethical Action

The happy complementarity of the ethical world does not survive. The same sexual foundation of the tranquil ethical world leads to its dissolution with the awakening of the sexes to their actual selfhood, an awakening that accompanies their ethical action. Through their respective ethical deeds, each sex proves self-destructive and destructive of the other—and comes to know it.

In the setting of the ethical world, an ethical consciousness exists. Males as husbands and fathers, brothers and sons, and females as wives and mothers, sisters and daughters know what they must do naturally.<sup>14</sup> In this synthesis of nature and ethos, the ethically differentiated roles

13. Hegel's references to the unconscious and to the repressed in his depiction of ethical life obviously suggest the sort of psychoanalytic, genetic accounts offered a century later by Freud and Jung.

14. “Natural” in this case involves the practices and customs that, grafted onto a biological base, constitute an ethos, into which a child becomes habituated. This natural development combines discipline, conflict, and punishment but also rewards, achievement, and promise of the same. Hegel does not idealize natural existence in terms of a solitary, purely bodily state, in a blissful harmony or in a constant war of aggression with others.

are not arbitrary, but rather are founded upon their natural sexual differences.<sup>15</sup> Yet this very naturalness, as noted earlier, is not itself reflected upon. Unimpeded by doubt, individuals in this ethical setting act purely from “duty” (*Pflicht*).<sup>16</sup> Certainly they have a sense of themselves, but as husbands or wives, sisters or brothers, i.e., ethical entities naturally specified, or, in other words, not as selves of their own making. A genuine self-consciousness, cognizant of its own individuality, comes only at the cost of the all too convenient complementarity of the sexes in the ethical world. From the standpoint of the state, the ethical world of the male in the scenario that Hegel portrays at this point, a woman’s world appears stubborn, irrational, and frivolous, while the male’s greater devotion to the human law of the state than to the divine law of the family is, in a woman’s eyes, a sacrilegious and arbitrary kind of violence.<sup>17</sup>

Consciousness of themselves as individuals, for man and woman, emerges in their actions and in two ways. On the one hand (and at the outset), the individual acts in accordance with what it knows itself to be in the ethical world. Self-consciousness, coming of age in this ethical setting, has its existence and its power not so much in itself as in another. On the other hand, deeds take an individual beyond consciousness of himself or herself in family terms alone—father or sister, son or wife—to a realization of one’s own distinctive individuality. The action establishes a disunion in the ethical world by affirming the actuality of something in opposition to the agent, however negative that reality is for him or her. Ethical action thus undermines the very single-mindedness of the agent, whether in male civic concerns or in the sacred family trust of a woman. The result is a new consciousness of one’s individuality, but it is a self-consciousness that takes the form of “guilt” (*Schuld*).<sup>18</sup>

The crime that calls forth this guilt is the failure to overcome the natural division of the divine law and the human law between the sexes.<sup>19</sup>

15. It is not clear to me that differences among various cultures and so-called “abnormalities” within a single culture need constitute evidence against Hegel’s claim.

16. What merits further consideration is whether this depiction of the natural genesis of duty is at odds with the account of duty in Kant’s moral philosophy. For Hegel’s own account, it bears noting that he explicitly concerns himself with duties once more in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in the chapter on morality. There it is not something natural but conscience that forms the basis of duties, which provide the content for conscientious convictions.

17. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 306.

18. Emerging from sexuality and introducing the dissolution of the ethical world, this self-consciousness literally *becomes* guilt, according to a literal reading of Hegel’s text; see *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 308.

19. *Ibid.*: “Dem Inhalte nach aber hat die sittliche *Handlung* das Moment des Verbrechens an ihr, weil sie die *natürliche* Verteilung der beiden Gesetze an die beiden Geschlechter nicht aufhebt, sondern vielmehr als *unentzweite* Richtung auf das Gesetz innerhalb der *natürlichen Unmittelbarkeit* bleibt und als Tun diese Einseitigkeit zur Schuld macht, nur die

The naturally divided ethical world of husband and wife, human and divine laws, provides a one-sided self-consciousness, an ethical consciousness overdetermined by their sexual roles in the ethical world. By acting and thus confronting yet confirming the reality of another law, individuals, once conscious of themselves largely as fathers or wives, sisters or sons, acquire a self-consciousness that is defined by more than their respective (and mutually exclusive) sexual roles in the family or the state.

Hegel turns to the figures of Oedipus and Antigone to illustrate the emergence of this self-consciousness, whose price is guilt and the dissolution of ethical life. Oedipus comes to realize his situation and to experience guilt only after his deeds, deeds clearly defined by the male world of ethical life. He acts as brother, husband, son and only with the ensuing guilt does he appreciate the one-sidedness of the human laws he obeyed.

Antigone's ethical consciousness is more complete and her guilt purer, since she knew in advance the law and the power she took for an ethical contingency (viz., in the form of Creon). The crime subverts the intention, however. Her action confirms the reality and the power of the law Creon embodies. Her exclusive devotion to divine law, that is to say, her exclusively female role in the ethical world must come to a tragic end. A similar fate befalls Creon's male decision, on behalf of the human law of the state, to refuse burial of a rebel, Antigone's slain brother. The state's power is rooted in the underworld, in the repressed piety of the family, incorporated in the rite of burying the dead. The unconscious, subterranean principle that the woman represents has its revenge.<sup>20</sup>

Hegel insists that both male and female ethical forces experience a similar demise. Neither sex has an advantage over the other, enabling it to claim to be more essential to the ethical world.<sup>21</sup>

The ethical conflict between families and the state or between individuals and the community is a conflict between male and female principles, the very principles that underlie the ethical world. The state, an explicitly male institution, suppresses what is at the same time essential to it, the independence of the family, the woman's offspring, thereby making femininity its enemy from within. "The eternal irony of the commonweal," as Hegel, voicing yet another stereotype, puts it, is that female capacity for intrigue, for transforming public works and property

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eine der Seiten des Wesens zu ergreifen und gegen die andere sich negative zu verhalten, d.h. sie zu verletzen."

20. Ibid., 309f., 312f.

21. Ibid., 310f.: "Denn keine der Mächte hat etwas vor der anderen voraus, um *wesentliches* Moment der Substanz zu sein."

into a family possession.<sup>22</sup> When society or state has become merely a family heirloom, the ethical world has dissolved.

However, there is also a kind of final male irony to ethical life as well, though Hegel does not name it as such. This irony, which also means the end of ethical life, is war. The polis, in order to survive, suppresses individuality, yet the very suppression engenders an individuality no longer at home in the ethical world. The polis needs, as mentioned earlier, male warriors in order to maintain its own individual statehood. Yet in the act of war individuals experience that the only validating principle is the suppressed, natural principle of destruction and ruin. Natural forces, after all, appearing as mere fortune, generated society and the state. In the face of war, individuals come to a consciousness of themselves free from all the exclusive determinations of the ethical world. Death is sexless.

The dissolution of ethical life leads to a *Rechtszustand*, the modern, post-Greek condition where rights and the legal definition of persons replace the family in society.<sup>23</sup> This condition engenders religious sentimentalism and superstition, on the one hand, and an enlightened rationality and utilitarianism, on the other. The contrast between these extremes, however, is only apparent, since each at bottom supposedly reflects an egoism born of the dissolution of ethical life. The end of this chapter in humanity's spiritual odyssey is the terror of the French Revolution, a historical indictment of the modern *Rechtszustand* and of the demise of the family-based ethical world.

## The Ethical Conclusion

What ethical implications, if any, can be drawn from Hegel's interpretation of the sexual basis of ethical life? This question probably appears premature and rightly so. In this paper I have offered little more than an exposition of that interpretation with the aim of making a case for my contention that there is evidence that Hegel regards sexual roles in society as something rooted not in nature but in a contingent, historical social arrangement, albeit an arrangement that exploits natural differences by fixing social roles in terms of those differences. Yet I could hardly make this case without also noting various respects in which Hegel is at the same time no exception to his era when it comes to certain sexist prejudices.

In addition to these prejudices, there are other presuppositions that

22. Ibid., 313f.

23. Families continue to exist but their dominant role and influence give way to the law.



also need to be addressed before we can adequately assess the ethical implications of his interpretation of the sexual basis of ethical life. Among the problematic presuppositions of his account are his notions of sexual identity and roles, as they purportedly manifest themselves in the family. Does construing the relationship between sister and brother as the primary model or even the original appearance of ethicality within a natural community devalue the possibly ethical character of erotic relationships, relegating them perhaps to a model of domination, exemplified by the ironic dynamisms existing between masters and slaves? How does the phenomenon of incest—or, for that matter, its taboo—affect this account? Is not the contrast between the naturalness of the family and the ethicality of what transcends the family an artificial distinction, capable, to be sure, of generating the dialectic of individual and state, but dependent on the assumption or, more precisely, an artful if critical appropriation of a distinctive (Kantian or at least universalistic) ethical point of view? To what extent, moreover, is Hegel's conception of family a product of his own times, anachronistically applied to the Greek world?

Other difficulties, more hermeneutical in nature and common to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, persist. For example, is the dissolution of ethical life a historical datum or something more or less grounded in human nature? Must ethical life deconstruct into a purely legalistic society on the brink of or, at least, on the way to terror?<sup>24</sup> What legitimacy is there to the hermeneutical strategy of taking the sexual roles and fates defined by the mixture of myth and theater in Greek tragedies as the basis of an interpretation of ethical life?<sup>25</sup>

The problems recited in the last few paragraphs—from Hegel's sexism and view of sexually defined roles in the family to his methodology in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*—are considerable and I do not wish to

24. In this connection the phrase "on the brink" is, as Tim Brownlee rightly observes, hardly accurate or, at least, abbreviated to a fault. The *Rechtszustand* of abstract persons is an important component of the *Sittlichkeit* section that opens the chapter on *Geist*. Moreover, on Hegel's account, subsequent events and conditions—the fall of the Roman Empire, the intervening centuries, and the shift to *Bildung*, the realization of one's alienation from oneself resulting from the formality and emptiness of that purely legal condition—are necessary stages prior to the development of the revolutionaries' utilitarian hubris and, ultimately, the Terror.

25. Hegel's mode of interpretation in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* is understandably little concerned with delivering a commentary on *Antigone* or Sophocles' intentions. Thus he may be excused from the charges demanding that he pay greater attention to other aspects of the play, for example, criticisms that he overlooks Antigone's suicide or the dynamics of other sexually defined relationships within the play (such as the sister-sister relationship). Nevertheless, even given the aims of Hegel's interpretation, namely, outlining the sexual basis of ethical life, it remains unclear to what extent this basis and semblances of its dynamic are confined to the archaic world and to what extent they are integral to our contemporary senses of sexuality-and-morality.

downplay the difficulty and significance of them. Nevertheless, with all its problems, Hegel's complex account of ethical life's sexual foundation affords a clear insight into a promising way of understanding the genesis and basic character of the ethical situation. The lessons of Oedipus and Antigone are the crime and guilt that come from failing to overcome a one-sided (male or female) realization of the powers and laws of ethical life. At the same time, while bringing down society and the state, the tragic fates suffered by Sophocles' protagonists challenge the ideology of de-sexualized personhood. The repression of sexuality naturally provokes a state of terror.

The ethical conclusion of Hegel's analysis is concentrated in a notion synonymous with his philosophy, the idea of *Aufhebung*. "*Aufhebung*" signifies an overcoming, but not in the sense of an annihilation or denial of what is overcome.<sup>26</sup> Rather what is overcome is superseded and transformed by the *Aufheber* and, in the process, transforms him or her. Hegel does not demonstrate the necessity of a sexual identification with a particular role. Indeed, far from demonstrating that familial life is woman's unique responsibility, Hegel's interpretation of *Antigone* points rather to the necessity of the breakdown of any such exclusive identification.

In sum, each sex must respect and even incorporate the opposite sexuality into himself or herself. Fathers must learn the art of mothering without deluding themselves into thinking they can replace mothers; sisters must learn to practice brotherhood, though they are never brothers. One's innate sexuality is thereby not ignored or denied, as in political and economic myths of egalitarianism or rugged individualism, but neither is it conceived as some primal and undistorted sign of who one is. Rather sexuality must be recognized as a natural and indispensable ingredient to the only genuine foundation of ethical life, the key to the delicate balance between family and society.

26. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 306: "Gegen solche Einseitigkeit hat die Wirklichkeit eine eigene Kraft, . . ."

## Chapter 10

# THE DIALECTIC OF CONSCIENCE AND THE NECESSITY OF MORALITY IN HEGEL'S *PHILOSOPHY OF RIGHT*

Hegel's account of conscience at the conclusion to the chapter on morality in the *Philosophy of Right* has had more than its share of detractors. Theunissen tries to explain why the account is "so meager," Findlay deems it "thoroughly scandalous," and Tugendhat goes so far as to label it the pinnacle of a "no longer merely conceptual, but rather moral perversion."<sup>1</sup> Even commentators committed to rescuing Hegel's discussion of conscience from such extreme reproaches agree that it is "one-sided" and "problematic."<sup>2</sup> The source of this widespread conclusion about Hegel's political incorrectness is not difficult to discern. In the wake of the na-

1. Michael Theunissen, "Die verdrängte Intersubjektivität in Hegels Philosophie des Rechts," in *Hegels Philosophie des Rechts*, ed. Dieter Henrich and Rolf-Peter Horstmann (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), 317–81; John N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1958), 318; Ernst Tugendhat, *Selbstbewußtsein und Selbstbestimmung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 349. Cf. also Rudolf Haym, *Hegel und seine Zeit* (Berlin: Gaertner, 1857; Hildesheim: Ohms, 1962), 375f.; Sidney Hook, "Hegel Rehabilitated?" and "Hegel and His Apologists," in *Hegel's Political Philosophy*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Atherton Press, 1970), 97: "[Hegel] dissolves the individual too much in the system of *Sittlichkeit* . . . insufficient justice is done to the individual of creative moral insight."; Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 5th ed. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), vol. 2, pp. 66–70. I am grateful to Michael Baur for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

2. Adriaan Peperzak, "Moralische Aspekte der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie," in *Hegels Rechtsphilosophie im Zusammenhang der europäischen Verfassungsgeschichte*, ed. Hans-Christian Lucas and Otto Pöggeler (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1986), 459: "[Hegel] läßt sich auch in diesem Kapitel [§§129–141], wie in der 'Vorrede' der *Grundlinien*, durch seine Polemik gegen den Subjektivismus zu Einseitigkeiten führen." See also Raymond Plant, *Hegel* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), 159f.; Klaus Hartmann, "Moralität und Konkretes Allgemeines," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 60 (1978): 314–24; Allen Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 190f.; Ludwig Siep, "Was heißt 'Aufhebung der Moralität in Sittlichkeit' in Hegels Rechtsphilosophie?" *Hegel-Studien* 17 (1982): 77: "Daß Entwicklung zuletzt notwendig Vereinseitigung und Verabsolutierung bedeutet, gilt in der Rechtsphilosophie nur für die Moralität."

tionalistic excesses and horrors of the last two centuries, there is an understandable suspicion about the motivations underlying claims that “the state cannot recognize conscience in its distinctive form, that is, as subjective knowing.”<sup>3</sup> When Hegel declares that the “formal subjectivity” of conscience, as the final achievement of morality, is “on the verge of turning into something evil,”<sup>4</sup> he seems clearly out of step with the reigning liberal political tradition, a tradition that regards the individual’s freedom to abide by his or her conscience as both an unassailable right and an inherent good.

To what extent this essentially political criticism of Hegel’s account of conscience can be sustained is one of the issues taken up in this paper. However, Hegel’s elaboration of the nature of conscience and morality has recently become the object of another sort of criticism, one based not so much on alien political sensibilities as on the structure of the argument and, indeed, on the goal of the *Philosophy of Right* as a whole. This criticism is articulated by Christoph Jermann, who faults Hegel’s presentation of morality for “falling outside the framework of the philosophy of right” because it does not contain what, according to Hegel himself, it ought to contain, falling as it does between “Abstract Right” and “Ethical Life.” Jermann has specifically in mind §106 of the *Philosophy of Right*, the second paragraph of “Morality,” where Hegel declares that “a higher ground” (*ein höherer Boden*) for freedom is achieved with the transition from abstract right to morality. In the light of this claim and the dialectical structure of the philosophy of right in general, Jermann maintains that “the sort of content belonging to right may not be completely absent, but instead must be contained as a positive moment. In [the text of] Hegel, however, this is precisely not the case.”<sup>5</sup>

In view of this considerable shortcoming, Jermann proposes a “correction” of the morality chapter: a restructuring modeled on the account of morality in the Nuremberg *Encyclopedia* of 1808.<sup>6</sup> This Nuremberg account elaborates the concrete content of the moral will, the duties of individuals to themselves, their families, and other human beings in general. Hegel’s presentation of morality in the *Philosophy of Right*, Jermann argues, needs to be expanded along these lines so that it contains a doctrine of moral duties and virtues.<sup>7</sup>

However, despite the fact that this sort of revision to a certain extent

3. *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* §137, 122.

4. *Ibid.* §139, 124.

5. Christoph Jermann, “Die Moralität,” in *Anspruch und Leistung von Hegels Rechtsphilosophie*, ed. Christoph Jermann (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1987), 128.

6. These lectures were intended for upperclassmen at the Nuremberg Gymnasium and thus form part of Hegel’s *Philosophical Propaedeutic*.

7. Jermann, 134–44.

is profiled by Hegel himself in the *Nuremberg Encyclopedia*, there are, Jermann adds, at least two specific problems with it. First, within the structure of the philosophy of right, it is not at all clear how so-called “moral” (*moralisch*) norms are to be distinguished from legal (*rechtlich*) or ethical (*sittlich*) ones. The second problem concerns the argument with which Hegel introduces the well-being of others as a goal of the individual. Such an intention, that “in an emphatic sense would have to obtain as a moral [intention],” can constitute only a possible, in no way an essential or necessary goal or purpose (*Zweck*) of the individual.<sup>8</sup> More importantly, the very motivation that emerges from the insight that “my well-being cannot exist without the well-being of others” is, in Hegel’s own words, “selfish.”<sup>9</sup> These considerations lead Jermann to the conclusion that Hegel’s philosophy of right is fundamentally inconsistent. Hegel’s *Rechtsphilosophie*, Jermann contends, is unable to sustain the truth that it claims to sustain, namely, the Christian wisdom that “the individual is supposed to seek his highest fulfillment in his existence for others.”<sup>10</sup>

In an important sense both Jermann’s internal critique and the liberal criticism sketched above are complementary. What is deemed systematically inconsistent by that internal critique (as far as the structure and goals of the philosophy of right are concerned) is the indeterminacy of the formal side of conscience and its lack of content at—or, better, as—the conclusion to the “Morality” chapter. This same feature of Hegel’s view of conscience is the source of contention in the liberal critique, since the emptiness of the moral conscience is precisely what, in Hegel’s argument, leads to the necessity of morality’s overcoming in-and-by ethical life. From the perspective of the liberal tradition, however, this transition appears to be nothing less than the annulment of the autonomy of the individual. Jermann’s charge regarding the philosophy of right’s inconsistency also turns on the interpretation of this transition. As long as Hegel in his philosophy of right construes conscience as something in itself empty, having content only within the framework of ethical life, the work fails to achieve its stated goal of being the conceptual equivalent of the Christian message. (In particular, Jermann seems to be suggesting, there is a correlation between the failure to articulate the absolute value of each individual as such and not simply as a family member

8. *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* §§125f., 113f.

9. Jermann, 142f. Jermann traces these difficulties back to the logical basis of Hegel’s philosophy of the subject.

10. Jermann, 144. Jermann’s contention that Hegel claims to be sustaining the Christian message is based upon the *Enzyklopädie*, §573, *Zusatz*, 555–69; *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, II in *Werke*, XVII, 339ff.; and *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, I in *Werke*, XVIII, 96f.

or citizen and the failure to articulate the message of acting, not out of self-interest, but out of love of others.)

Whether the standard liberal criticism and/or Jermann's internal criticism of Hegel's account of conscience can be sustained or not, the challenge they represent is both formidable and instructive. Both criticisms can only be rebutted through an adequate explanation or, better, justification of the necessity of the "lack of content" of conscience as the "end" of morality within the philosophy of right.<sup>11</sup> The following reflections are conceived as an attempt to demonstrate that Hegel has good reasons to determine conscience as the highest point of morality in the way that he does in the *Philosophy of Right*. My aim on the next few pages is not to mount a refutation of the criticisms advanced against Hegel's conception of conscience in this context, but rather to show that they are considerably weakened by the fact that they fail to appreciate the dialectic of conscience and the necessity of morality within ethical life, indicated by that dialectic.<sup>12</sup> The first step toward making this case is to clarify the context and structure of the argument within which Hegel elaborates his conception of conscience.

Hegel's account of conscience in the *Philosophy of Right* occurs at the conclusion to the third section of the "Morality" chapter, and bears the title: "The Good and Conscience." The good, Hegel relates, is "the *realized freedom, the absolute and final purpose of the world*." The good is the world's final purpose (*Endzweck*) because it overcomes the alleged self-sufficiency of both abstract right and the well-being of an individual will, but in the process retains what is essential to both rightness and well-being (or "welfare": *das Wohl*). When a particular condition or sense of well-being is not right, it is not a good, and where there is no sense of well-being in doing what is right, doing what is right is not a good. In other words, it cannot be considered a good thing if well-being embodies nothing more than the particular purposes of an individual will or if something that is right is not embraced and realized (desired and chosen) by the individual.

From these considerations, to be sure, it follows that the good, while it is the "more concrete" form, also presupposes the notions of right-

11. Such a justification would be, of course, only a necessary but not a sufficient condition for rejecting the liberal or the internal criticisms advanced against Hegel's account of conscience.

12. As is often the case in disputes about the significance of Hegel's treatment of various themes, the difference between the interpretation presented in the following pages and that represented by the critics mentioned earlier turns on the appropriateness of interpretation of the sense of *Aufhebung* at work; in the case at hand, the meaning of the *Aufhebung* of morality in ethical life. On the general theme of this *Aufhebung*, see Siep (note 2, above).

ness and well-being. What is good only becomes actual by means of an individual, subjective will. For this particular will, however, the good is at first only a duty or abstract idea that the individual “*is supposed* to make its purpose and bring about.”<sup>13</sup> In the face of this abstract idea of the good the individual has the right—indeed, “the supreme right of the subject”—of recognizing as good only what he or she regards as rational or objective.<sup>14</sup>

The existence of this right, however, does not mean that the subject cannot err or that it must not rely upon general notions of abstract rights or upon its private sense of well-being. Thus, in this connection, even before the introduction of the concept of conscience, Hegel emphasizes that one’s convictions about the good in no way undermine the “rights of objectivity” (*Rechte der Objektivität*): “By virtue of the fact that the laws are made public and by virtue of the general customs, the state removes from the right to this insight the formal side and the contingency which this right still has on that [i.e., moral] standpoint.”<sup>15</sup>

It would be easy but misleading to interpret this last remark as though Hegel in the end ignores the reasons that he himself advances for that “supreme right” of individuals ultimately to determine for themselves what is good. Precisely because of the abstract universality or indeterminacy of the idea of duty it must immediately fall to “subjectivity” to determine the particular duties. This subjectivity, moreover, is capable of doing this, because “in the universality of it, reflected into itself,” it is “the absolute certainty of itself.”<sup>16</sup> According to Hegel, the sort of subjectivity that understands itself in this way and that thus is “what is determining and decisive” for the particular duties is a modern phenomenon: conscience.<sup>17</sup> With this phenomenon, subjectivity first comes into its own, that is to say, both knowledge and action on the part of the individual human subject as such become essential; that something in and of itself good is actually recognized as such, and that steps are accordingly taken to realize it, undoubtedly depend upon what the individual subject

13. *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* §131, 116; see, too, §133, 119.

14. *Ibid.* §132, 117.

15. *Ibid.*, 118.

16. *Ibid.* §136, 121.

17. As for the modernity of the phenomenon of conscience, see *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* §124, 112: “Das Recht der *Besonderheit* des Subjekts, sich befriedigt zu finden, oder, was dasselbe ist, das Recht der *subjektiven Freiheit* macht den Wende- und Mittelpunkt in dem Unterschied des *Altertums* und der *modernen Zeit*.” See also Karel Bal, “Der Begriff Gewissen als zentrale Kategorie der Hegelschen Ethik,” in *Hegel-Jahrbuch* 1987, ed. Heinz Kimmerle, Wolfgang Lefevre, and Rudolf Meyer (Bochum: Germinal, 1987), 227. For an argument, however, that there is clearly a doctrine of conscience *before* the dawn of modernity, see H. Reiner, “Die Funktion des Gewissens,” *Kant-Studien* 62 (1971): 467–88.



knows and can do. "Everything that emerges in ethical life, is brought about by the activity of the mind or spirit [*Geist*]." <sup>18</sup>

Conscience thus expresses that supreme right of the subject, discussed earlier, "of knowing within itself and on the basis of itself what is right and a duty, and of recognizing nothing other than what it knows to be good. . . ." <sup>19</sup> This characterization involves, to be sure, a fundamental ambiguity. On the one hand, "conscience" stands for the subject's autonomy, its capacity to determine itself, precisely because it decides for itself what is good in and of itself. Taken in this way, conscience is a unity of subjectivity and objectivity, a "holy shrine that it would be a sacrilege to touch." <sup>20</sup> At the same time, however, conscience, merely as the activity of the subjective will, neither can nor ought to determine what is good. A specific individual may be dutifully following conscience in considering something good and right, but that in no way establishes that it actually is so. <sup>21</sup> Conscience alone provides no principle or criterion for distinguishing between actions that fulfill duties and those that are merely arbitrary or even evil. Determining what one is supposed to do solely on the basis of one's own will contradicts the universality of the good. "Conscience is accordingly subject to the judgment of whether it is genuine or not, and its appeal to its self is directly at odds with what it wants to be, the rule of a rational, universal manner of acting, valid in and of itself." <sup>22</sup> It is in this connection that Hegel accordingly declares conscience to be the "common root" of morality and evil.

Hegel explicates the ambiguity of conscience—or, in a literal but apt transcription of the German term for ambiguity, *Zwei-deutigkeit*, its double meaning—by referring to conscience in two respects: ethical life and morality. "The genuine conscience" (*das wahrhafte Gewissen*) is conscience at the level of ethical life, where subjective knowing and the objective system of principles and duties are not severed from one another, but rather united. Such a conscience, Hegel notes, "is contained in the ethical mentality [*sittliche Gesinnung*] that first appears in what follows" (though in fact Hegel has, it bears noting, notoriously little to say about this genuine conscience as such in the third part of the *Philosophy*

18. Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke (Jubiläumsausgabe)*, ed. Hermann Glockner (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1928), VII, 199; see, too, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* §132, 117f.

19. *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* §137, 121ff.; see Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke (Jubiläumsausgabe)*, VII, 196: ". . . das Gewissen weiß sich selbst als das Denken, und daß dieses mein Denken das allein für mich Verpflichtende ist."

20. *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* §137, 122.

21. See Plant's suggestion (Plant, 160) and Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1967), §§256–70, Seiten 117–21.

22. *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* §137, 122.



of Right). On the other hand, at the level of morality or, in other words, without that objective content that only proceeds from ethical life, there remains only the formal side of conscience, which can be nothing but "the certainty of *this* [individual] subject."<sup>23</sup> It is this formal side of conscience that, as already noted, Hegel deems the "common root" of morality and evil. Although Hegel does not venture to explain the origin of evil, he sketches the "mystery" underlying this origin. The mystery of evil is the will's need, as part of its freedom, to determine itself on the basis of what is natural to it and yet by that very fact to be, in itself, at odds with its nature.<sup>24</sup>

The significance of this reference to the mystery of the origin of evil will have to be considered later. What precisely, however, is meant by the distinction of the formal side of conscience as the root of evil from the genuine conscience? What does this distinction accomplish? In the remainder of this study I would like to pursue the thesis that these two senses of "conscience" are not so much a sign of a debilitating ambiguity as they are an indication of the dynamic and inherently dialectical character of conscience, without which, in the final analysis, not only morality but also ethical life cannot be sustained.<sup>25</sup> That there is a dialectic of conscience, moreover, has important implications for understanding the relation between morality and ethical life or, more exactly, for understanding the way in which the moral sphere is challenged yet reformed and retained (*aufgehoben*) in ethical life within the *Philosophy of Right*. The key to an important part of the answer to critics of Hegel's doctrine of conscience lies in the elucidation of the dynamism and necessary ambiguity attaching to conscience. Demonstrating this dialectic

23. Ibid. Inasmuch as the good, which by definition is necessarily universal, can only be determined by one's conscience and inasmuch as one's conscience is constituted by the decisions made by the subjective will, certain of itself, conscience cannot be suitably ascribed, as it is by Bal to "the sphere of feelings" (Bal, 228).

24. This contradiction that conceals and bears evil within itself can come about in two sorts of ways (*Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* §139, 124f.). On one level, the will can become evil naturally, in that the interiority or being-for-itself of the will is simply relative and accordingly determines its content solely on the basis of the particularities of its nature, namely, desire, instinct, inclinations, and the like that can be either good or evil. However, human beings can also be evil through their own reflections, insofar as they make the form of these natural, particular dispositions determine the content of their wills. Doing the latter is, in effect, to let one's will be dictated by its particular dispositions rather than by what is universal about the will ("als dem inneren Objektiven, dem Guten, welches zugleich mit der Reflexion des Willens in sich und dem erkennenden Bewußtsein . . . eintritt"). To borrow Schiller's categories, these two sorts of evil might be dubbed "naïve and sentimental evils."

25. The relationship between ambiguity or vagueness and dialectic has been suggested by Georg Henrik von Wright's account of "Truth-Logic and 'Dialectical Synthesis,'" in his *Truth, Knowledge, and Modality: Philosophical Papers*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 36–39.

of conscience is a way of establishing the necessity of morality for-and-within ethical life.

Not surprisingly, there are scholars who have already broached this way of viewing conscience in the context of the *Philosophy of Right*. After all, it is obvious from the very fact that Hegel distinguishes the formal side of conscience from a genuine conscience that he has no intention of eliminating conscience from ethical life. Karel Bal, for example, has ably demonstrated that a genuine conscience constitutes an integral part of what Hegel calls "ethical life."<sup>26</sup> Also noteworthy in this connection is the insightful work of Ludwig Siep. Recognizing that there is a development to ethical life itself, "within which its relationship to morality changes," Siep establishes that Hegel's conception of ethical life in his mature philosophy of right in no way rejects or eliminates, but rather preserves and expands upon the notion of conscience and other aspects of morality.<sup>27</sup>

By elaborating the meaning of conscience in the context of ethical life, the conclusions reached by Bal and Siep present an important part of any rebuttal of the liberal criticisms of Hegel's account of conscience, mentioned at the outset of this study. Their efforts trenchantly demonstrate that interpretations of Hegel's doctrine of conscience are inadequate, indeed fail to do justice to it, if they restrict consideration of doctrine to the level of morality alone. Liberal critics, in particular, are often guilty of taking a part of that doctrine for the whole in this manner. These critics overlook the fact that as a member of a family and as a citizen of a state, with all the obligations these ethical institutions involve, a human being does not, in Hegel's account, cease to be "a private, moral, religious individual with his own particular responsibilities."<sup>28</sup>

Yet, while I am in agreement with this general way of answering critics of Hegel's doctrine of conscience, the strategy of this response runs the risk, in my opinion, of neglecting the genuine dynamic of conscience that emerges from the dialectical relationship between the formal side of conscience and a genuine conscience (or, if the abbreviation may be permitted, between a moral conscience and an ethical conscience). The attempt to show the existence of an ethical conscience in the family, civil society, and the state reinforces the impression that the phenomenon of conscience with its sheer lack of content, the phenomenon that is the root of evil and capable of entertaining courses of actions apart from all obligations, must be sacrificed to the ethical world.<sup>29</sup> In this way, how-

26. Bal, 230.

27. Siep, 87.

28. Siep, 96.

29. Bal, 233: "Alle Bemühungen der gesellschaftlichen Moral, jenes «substantiellen» «Gewebes» des «wahrhaften» Staates, sind bei Hegel auf die Verschmelzung des Indivi-

ever, neither the liberal criticism nor the internal criticism advanced by Jermann can be refuted. For, as noted earlier, underlying both criticisms is their objection to the sheer emptiness of conscience, as Hegel describes it at the level of morality. The liberal criticism insists that no (ethical) institution is more actual or more valuable than the individual, that the individual alone can ultimately know the motives of his or her heart, and that this integrity of the individual may only be compromised when the individual's choices would otherwise lead to the injury of other individuals. In a similar way, Jermann argues that this doctrine of conscience at the level of morality is untenable on internal grounds inasmuch as the account of moral conscience, following the doctrine of abstract right, may not be empty and, for this reason, ought to be rectified by the inclusion of a doctrine of pre-ethical or even extra-ethical (but moral) virtues.

While the lack of a more developed doctrine of virtue within ethical life in the *Philosophy of Right* is disconcerting,<sup>30</sup> there is, nonetheless, an obvious and eminently satisfactory reason why conscience, precisely as Hegel explains it at the level of morality (that is to say, "formal conscience"), should never disappear within the ethical world. The "formal side" of conscience signifies something quite real, namely, the process of deciding, that is attributable to the subjective will alone. This side of conscience is the certainty of the individual, not only that a specific, imminent action is right or not, but also that it remains for him or her alone to concur with that action or not. If this side of conscience is lacking, then there can be neither good nor evil, neither morality nor ethical life, indeed, neither responsibility nor a genuine conscience.<sup>31</sup>

Hegel himself insists on the tenability of this moral moment, as evidenced by his reference to the fact that there have been times when ethical life had to give way to the morality of an individual conscience. In times, Hegel insists, "when actual life (*Wirklichkeit*) is a hollow existence, devoid of spirit and content," conscience has its own rights in the face of

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duums mit der Gesellschaft gerichtet." Haym, 376: "Das Moralische legitimiert sich nur erst dadurch, daß es dem Staate tributär wird, nur durch das Verzichten auf seine unendliche Autonomie und auf die Endgültigkeit des Selbstentscheidens." Siep, 91: "Das Individuum ist für Hegel prinzipiell kein unbeschriebenes Blatt, das an eine Gemeinschaft mit ihren Sitten und Gesetzen herantritt und sich mit ihr auseinandersetzt. Es ist vielmehr die Besonderung eines Gemeinschaftswesens. . . . Aber das Individuum verwirklicht sich auch nicht in der Uniformität mit seiner Klasse, Schicht oder Nation, sondern indem es deren vernünftigen Geist «aus sich als sein Eigenstes, Wahrstes bestimmt und erschafft» (Vorl. 3: 496)."

30. See, however, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* §150, 145ff., and Adriaan Peperzak, "Hegels Pflichten- und Tugendlehre," *Hegel-Studien* 17 (1982): 95-117.

31. Peperzak, "Hegels Pflichten- und Tugendlehre," 115: "Der moralische Gesichtspunkt ist das formelle und leere, aber notwendige Moment der Ethik."

the ethical world.<sup>32</sup> As examples of such periods Hegel mentions Athens at the time of Socrates, the Rome of the Stoics, and just possibly his contemporary Germany.<sup>33</sup> In this way Hegel clearly alludes to the difference between his systematic account of morality's relationship to ethical life and the possible, historical forms of this relationship.

The sheer formality of conscience serves, however, an obvious, further purpose in the philosophy of right. The identification of the self with the merely formal side of conscience is an utter abstraction; that is to say, the self that is entertained when one thinks of oneself apart from any obligations exists only in that act. Yet, since the formal side of conscience must always be taken into account, the possibility of this identification and thereby the possibility of forms of evil never are and should never be thought to be fully out of play. The formal side of conscience and thereby the possibility of evil participate in the course of the development of ethical life—but without ever being completely extinguished.<sup>34</sup> Precisely because the formal side of conscience or, better, the moral conscience may never disappear and yet does not suffice to distinguish good from evil, the genuine conscience remains something that must always be achieved at every stage of ethical life. Herein lie the dynamics of conscience, namely, the certainty of individuals that it is left to them alone to bring about good or evil by agreeing to this or that way of acting and that, nevertheless, the truth about what is good lies in their unity as individuals with what is universal, in other words, in their ethical existence.<sup>35</sup>

While he differentiates the two senses of "conscience," Hegel does not forget that they refer to one and the same phenomenon. By contrast, both the liberal criticism and the internal criticism advanced by Jermann seem to proceed from the assumption that Hegel in the philosophy of right has two distinct phenomena in mind, although the moral conscience is replaced by the ethical conscience. There is, however, on

32. Hegel, *Sämtliche Werke (Jubiliäumsausgabe)*, VII, 199f.

33. *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* §138, 123f.

34. Ibid. §151 *Zusatz*: "Gewissen, Reflexion, Moralität ist nicht Geist, so stumpe Unschuld auch nicht." See also Bal, 227: "Alle Versuche, das Gewissen durch etwas anderes zu ersetzen, was eine dem Individuum gegenüber äußere Macht bildete, führen nur zur Ausmerzung der Moral und des Guten."

35. The interpretation of conscience presented on these pages, in my opinion, faithfully corresponds to Hegel's account of the freedom of the will as the "unity" of the "sheer indeterminacy or sheer reflection of the I in itself" and the "positing of itself as something determinate," articulated in *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* §§5–7, 30ff. That such a unity is not a contradiction as is an "arbitrary will" (*Willkür*), see *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* §15, 37f. For the Kantian roots of this problem (or, better, for Kant's attempts to struggle with a similar problem), see Henry E. Allison, "Wille, Willkür, and *Gesinnung*," in his *Kant's Theory of Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 129–36.

the one hand, something quite wrong with the assumption that individual selves or subjective wills become actual outside of the ethical world. On the other hand, there is no ethical world if it does not become clear to individuals again and again that they bear responsibility for this world. Or, to put the matter another way, the dynamic tension between the formal, moral side of conscience and the genuine, ethical conscience is the actual, human condition. From this way of putting the matter, it follows that the genuine conscience always consists in an *achievement*, an achievement that is set in motion only on the basis of the fact that the objectivity—and not merely the intersubjective consensus—of the social condition of humanity is revealed through and to the moral certainty of conscience. (It scarcely needs to be added that what is particularly remarkable about this achievement is the fact that such moral certainty is anything but infallible.)

In his interpretation of the chapter on morality in the *Philosophy of Right*, Jermann emphasizes the necessity of countenancing specifically moral norms beyond the confines of legal as well as ethical norms, if Hegel is to succeed in accomplishing one of the central goals of his philosophy.<sup>36</sup> But even if there are such moral norms, individuals must—indeed, in keeping with the Christian message—again and again be capable of the insight that the reality of good and evil depends upon their decisions as individuals. Otherwise ethical life would not be “the living good that [has] its knowing and willing in self-consciousness and its reality through action by this self-consciousness, just as this [self-consciousness] has its foundation, existing in and of itself, and moving purpose in the ethical being.”<sup>37</sup>

36. At the same time Jermann explains the formality of moral norms by the fact that, in contrast to matters of right, they have a “rather regulative character” since in the case of morality what matters is what the individual “should do in his particular situation” (Jermann, 142); Allen Wood also presents the sphere of morality as that of a sort of “situation ethics” (Wood, 174).

37. *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* §142, 142: “Die Sittlichkeit ist die *Idee der Freiheit*, als das lebendige Gute, das in dem Selbstbewußtsein sein Wissen, Wollen [hat] und durch dessen Handeln seine Wirklichkeit, sowie dieses [Handeln] an dem sittlichen Sein seine an und für sich seiende Grundlage und bewegenden Zweck hat,—der zur *vorhandenen Welt* und zur *Natur des Selbstbewußtseins* gewordene Begriff der *Freiheit*.”

## Chapter 11

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### HEGEL'S APPROPRIATION OF KANT'S ACCOUNT OF PURPOSIVENESS IN NATURE Evolution and the Teleological Legacy in Biology

“One of Kant’s great services to philosophy,” Hegel observes in the chapter on teleology in the *Science of Logic*, “consists in the distinction which he sets up between relative or *external* and *internal* purposiveness; in the latter he opened up the concept of *life*, the *Idea*.”<sup>1</sup> Kant’s account of natural purposes, based upon the notion of internal purposiveness, gives expression, Hegel continues, to nothing less than “the *concrete universal*,” incorporating both particularity and externality.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, however, Hegel finds Kant’s elaboration of this teleological principle essentially “unsatisfactory” and he lambasts Kant for not simply “confusing,” but even “ruining,” this “highest idea.”<sup>3</sup> Moreover, as is demonstrated in greater detail below, this censure of Kant’s ultimate treatment of teleological judgments remains as constant in Hegel’s writings as his praise for the idea of inner purposiveness.

The immediate aim of the following study is to examine Hegel’s ontological and critical appropriation of Kant’s account of teleology in nature. There are at least two purposes that are served by pursuing this aim and that, accordingly, form the background and interpretive horizon for the examination. First, the examination demonstrates just how significantly Hegel’s reading of Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* figures in the development of his speculative metaphysics. As Klaus Düsing notes, of all the doctrines elaborated in Kant’s three critiques, none stand clos-

1. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 157. I am grateful to Michael Baur and Richard Hassing for the helpful advice they provided me in preparing this paper.

2. *Ibid.*, 159.

3. *Ibid.*, 159; Hegel, *Glauben und Wissen* in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4, 343.

er in Hegel's eyes to his own position than those formulated in the *Critique of Teleological Judgment*.<sup>4</sup> Second, for all the differences exhibited by what each construes to be an adequate account of organic nature as well as the possibilities of such an account, Kant's and Hegel's philosophies of organic nature rest on certain shared assumptions. Some of these assumptions are compatible, others incompatible, with the neo-Darwinian synthesis dominating much contemporary biology.<sup>5</sup>

Remarkably, these theoretical incompatibilities are resurfacing in recent challenges to the neo-Darwinian synthesis, a development briefly addressed in the final segment of this paper. Precisely because such challenges to the regnant paradigm can be given a Kantian or Hegelian interpretation, the examination of the nature and validity of Hegel's critical appropriation of Kant's conception of natural purposes takes on added significance.

## Purposiveness and Intuitive Understanding in Kant's Critique of Teleological Judgment

A scientist investigating some specific natural phenomenon is on the lookout for a rule under which it may be subsumed, that is to say, a general principle in terms of which that particular phenomenon may be explained. In other words, the scientist assumes the possibility of understanding that phenomenon, a possibility entailing the idea that there is an underlying unity to that phenomenon. In effect, the researcher investigates nature as though it in some way accords with, or is suited to, his or her abilities to understand it, as if it were there for him or her.<sup>6</sup>

"Purposiveness" is Kant's term for the principle at work here. Purposiveness in a broad sense signifies the sort of causality involved when a concept or, analogously, a future possibility of an object, at which the object is aimed or for which it is designed, is regarded as the object's cause.<sup>7</sup> Paradigmatically, purposiveness is the causal principle involved

4. Klaus Düsing, "Naturteleologie und Metaphysik bei Kant und Hegel," in *Hegel und die "Kritik der Urteilskraft"*, ed. Hans-Friedrich Fulda and Rolf-Peter Horstmann (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1990), 149.

5. For useful outlines of the "neo-Darwinian synthesis," see Ernst Mayr, *Toward a New Philosophy of Biology: Observations of an Evolutionist* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 185–95, and Stuart A. Kauffman, *The Origins of Order: Self-Organization and Selection in Evolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3–26.

6. For Kant's "deduction" of this transcendental principle of nature's purposiveness, see *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, V, 182–85. For a helpful discussion of the relation of this principle to the transcendental laws of nature and the three principles of homogeneity, specification, and continuity, elaborated in the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, see Klaus Düsing, *Die Teleologie in Kants Weltbegriff*, 2nd ed. (Bonn: Grundmann, 1986), 51–65.

7. See KU 219f.

in human action, for example, in art or manufacture, where the entertaining of some effect (such as drafting and consulting the plans for a building) contributes to the production of that effect. Analogously, the working scientist regards the possible unity to specific natural phenomena (which otherwise present themselves merely as contingent) as the cause or explanation for the reality at hand, as though nature in all its particular manifestations followed some plan or concept, allowing scientists to grasp it as a system. In this way Kant argues in the *Critique of Judgment* that the transcendental principle of the purposiveness of nature serves as the necessary basis for the scientific researcher's attempt to grasp the myriad particular forms and laws of natural phenomena.<sup>8</sup>

An analogous use of the same principle, he contends, makes it possible to grasp the distinctive character of organic behavior which remains inexplicable on mechanical grounds alone.<sup>9</sup> Specifically, the reproduction of the species from one distinct individual to the next, the individual organism's development through assimilation of material lying outside it, and finally, the reciprocal renewal and maintenance by various organs within an entire organic being, all seem possible to Kant only on the basis of some central steering principle or "natural purpose."<sup>10</sup> An organism, he observes, has a kind of "formative force."<sup>11</sup> In each case, something that is merely possible—for example, the next generation or the growth, maintenance, and repair of the individual organism as a whole—is regarded as the cause of the processes which bring it about. More specifically, in order for something to be so regarded as a "natural purpose," the parts of the entity must be possible only through their relation to the whole entity and the parts must combine into the unity of the whole entity "by virtue of the fact that they are, in regard to one another, reciprocally cause and effect of the form of the unity."<sup>12</sup>

When Kant speaks of an "inner purposiveness," he has in mind precisely such an "organized and self-organizing entity."<sup>13</sup> Apart from any

8. The principle is transcendental and not metaphysical because it does not suppose any empirical content of objects and merely concerns the way they can be experientially known (*KU* 181f.).

9. Thus, Kant distinguishes the subjective purposiveness of nature (such that human judgment is capable of grasping it in its empirical manifestations as a system) from the objective purposiveness of nature, where "the laws of causality in terms of the mere mechanism of nature do not suffice" to explain specific objects; see *KU* 359f., 370. On how the subjective or, more precisely, the transcendental principle of nature's purposiveness prepares us for the principle of its objective purposiveness, see Düsing, *Die Teleologie in Kants Weltbegriff*, 88f. For the further distinction into formally and materially objective purposiveness, see *KU* 362–66.

10. *KU* 370ff.

11. *KU* 424; see J. F. Blumenbach, *Über den Bildungstrieb* (Göttingen: Johann Christian Dieterich, 1781, 1789).

12. *KU* 372f.

13. *KU* 374.



connection with other things, it has to be considered as a purposeful whole. Everything within it is at once means and end, reciprocally and, for the sake of the whole, necessarily. Thus, in air-breathing vertebrates, for example, certain muscular movements, namely, a rhythmical expansion and contraction of the walls of the chest rush oxygen into the lungs where it is absorbed into the blood stream at the alveoli; the oxygenated blood is then conveyed to the left ventricle of the heart via the pulmonary veins and pumped by the heart to the medulla oblongata which in turn controls those muscular movements that induce air into the lungs. Such inner purposiveness stands in direct contrast to relative or external purposiveness, for example, the beneficial character of a particular environment, its supply of foodstuffs or the protection it affords.<sup>14</sup> Accordingly, Kant defines "the principle for the evaluation of inner purposiveness in organized entities" as follows: "An organized product of nature is that in which everything is purpose and reciprocally also means."<sup>15</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Kant emphasizes that there is only an analogy, indeed a "distant analogy," between this organic sort of final causality and "that characteristic of human action."<sup>16</sup> The similarity lies in the fact that in each case a future possibility is construed as the cause of what is actual. At the same time, however, this possibility is not a concept or plan entertained by the organism. The end or purpose lies in the organism itself and not, as in art, in the mind of a human agent.

Due in part to this distant analogy, Kant regards inner, materially objective purposiveness as merely a regulative principle of reflective judgment, not a constitutive principle.<sup>17</sup> The meaning of this regulative character becomes clear in Kant's treatment of the antinomy of teleological judgment. The proposition "every production of material things is possible according to mechanical laws alone" and its opposite together yield a contradiction. These propositions yield a contradiction because together they both affirm and deny the same thing about every natural object. No such contradiction, however, is involved in maxims that are not judgments about objects, but rather subjective principles that guide research and reflection about objects. There is, in other words, nothing contradictory about attempting to explain specific natural phenomena "according to mechanical laws alone," insofar as that can be done, and at the same time allowing for the possibility that for some combinations of things in nature "a causality distinct from mechanism, namely, an (intelligent) cause of the world acting according to purposes" must be entertained.<sup>18</sup>

14. *KU* 367ff., 377f.

16. *KU* 375.

18. *KU* 387ff.

15. *KU* 376.

17. *KU* 360f., 378f.

As this last qualification indicates, the teleological maxim entails the idea of a divine intellect (as does, in fact, the transcendental principle of nature's purposiveness).<sup>19</sup> Kant determines this idea by first reviewing its counterpart, the finite, discursive human intellect. A finite mind must proceed from a concept as an "analytic-universal" (a representation of a feature common to many objects) in order to understand, however imperfectly, the particular and then the individual.<sup>20</sup> To the extent that a finite mind is able to understand any particular thing, it must "run through" all the concepts applicable to that thing; in other words, it can understand the whole thing only by synthesizing all its parts or features.<sup>21</sup> A finite mind is further marked by the fact that particular things are given to it in contingent, empirical intuitions and, hence, whether those things can be adequately conceived (subsumed under suitable universals or rules) is an equally contingent affair.<sup>22</sup>

By contrast, a divine intellect, which is nothing but a "negative" counterpart to the discursive, finite intellect of human beings, enjoys a spontaneous, intellectual intuition.<sup>23</sup> This intellect has no need of concepts since it intuitively (produces) the whole as such, grasping the particular thing in a so-called "synthetic-universal."<sup>24</sup> Rather than proceed from parts or, more exactly, from concepts as partial representations (*Teilvorstellungen*) as does the finite mind, the divine intellect grasps the whole in which all the parts are contained.<sup>25</sup>

A divine, intuitive intellect is a mere idea entailed, as already emphasized, by the principle of an intrinsic purposiveness or a natural purpose. Both that idea and this principle are drafted in order to make organic wholes understandable, given the discursive character of human understanding. Thus, the student of nature encounters organic wholes that seem to underlie their respective parts and the connection among those parts. In analogy with an intuitive intellect, a finite, discursive mind can entertain the idea of the possibility of the whole—in effect, the purpose—as the basis for the composition and combination of parts, through which the whole is actualized.

Given this account, however, there can be no presumption that the assignment of purposes is objective or ontological or that the causal character of organic wholes has been adequately understood. The concept

19. KU 407.

20. KU 406; Immanuel Kant, *Logic*, in *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, IX, 91.

21. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, IX, 63f.; Düsing, *Die Teleologie in Kants Weltbegriff*, 90f.

22. KU 406f.

23. KU 406.

24. KU 407.

25. KU 409; *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, XVIII, 478 (Reflexion No. 6174): "God's knowledge determines each part in the whole; human beings' knowledge the whole through the parts."

of purpose cannot, in Kant's words, be accorded "objective reality" for the familiar reason that purposes in nature are not observed, "not given to us by the object."<sup>26</sup> Moreover, for all Kant's emphasis on the necessity of regarding an organic entity as something designed,<sup>27</sup> he allows for the possibility of a mechanistic explanation of that apparent design:

But then it would be presumptuous of us to have judged that in nature, supposing we were able to penetrate to its principle with regard to the specification of its general laws which we know, there could not lie hidden at all a sufficient ground of the possibility of organized entities without supposing an intention to their generation (thus in the mechanism alone of them); for how do we intend to come to know that?<sup>28</sup>

That Kant thus leaves the door open for a mechanistic explanation is not surprising given the primacy he repeatedly accords such an explanation. Only on the basis of nature's mechanism, he maintains, are we able to have any insight into the nature of things at all and without that mechanism there can be no natural science.<sup>29</sup>

## Hegel's Ontological and Critical Appropriation

As his correspondence with Hölderlin and Schelling attests, Hegel was preoccupied with Kant's doctrine of natural teleology as early as January 1795.<sup>30</sup> However, the first clear indication of the eventual direction of his critical appropriation of the doctrine can be found in the *Difference* essay of 1801. There Hegel notes with approval both Kant's account of natural purposes inasmuch as it presents nature as a "subject-object," identifying "concept and being," and his notion of an intuitive understanding—which establishes the possibility, as Hegel puts it, that "natural mechanism and natural purposiveness coincide."<sup>31</sup> Yet he also takes Kant to task for maintaining that "this view of nature obtains . . . only as a maxim of our limited, discursively thinking, human intellect."<sup>32</sup>

Hegel expands on this same basic theme a year later in his first extend-

26. *KU* 399.

27. *KU* 398: "Wir haben nämlich unentbehrlich nöthig, der Natur den Begriff einer Absicht unterzulegen, wenn wir ihr auch nur in ihren organisirten Producten durch fortgesetzte Beobachtung nachforschen wollen."

28. *KU* 400; cf. Düsing, "Naturteleologie und Metaphysik bei Kant und Hegel," 150.

29. *KU* 387, 410, 415, 418; see John H. Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 223.

30. *Briefe von und an Hegel*, edited by J. Hoffmeister, 4 vols. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1952–60), 1: 17, 20.

31. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 69.

32. *Ibid.*

ed treatment of Kant's philosophy as he addresses in *Faith and Knowledge* "the most interesting point of the Kantian system," namely, the *Critique of Judgment*.<sup>33</sup> He lauds Kant's account of organic nature within the critique of teleological judgment for its clear articulation of the necessity of countenancing an identity to both the universal and the particular, the actual and the possible, and subject and object.<sup>34</sup> Influenced as he was at the time by a certain reading of Spinoza, Hegel regards the idea of this identity as at least equivalent to the idea of an intuitive understanding.<sup>35</sup> Thus, in contrast to Kant's own presentation, Hegel does not keep the concept of a natural purpose or inner purposiveness distinct from the idea of an intuitive understanding. Instead he maintains that Kant's reflection on organic nature—labeled by Hegel here "the unconscious intuition of the reality of reason"—expresses the idea of an intuitive understanding, that is to say, an understanding "whose spontaneity is at once intuiting."<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, he characterizes the organism itself as "real reason" and "the supreme principle of nature and [the] identity of the universal and the particular."<sup>37</sup>

None of these transformations of Kant's doctrine accompanying its exposition in *Faith and Knowledge* alter Hegel's basic criticism of that doctrine. There is no warrant, Hegel maintains, especially in the wake of Kant's acknowledgment of the inevitability of the idea, for insisting that the idea of natural purpose does not yield genuinely objective knowledge of organic nature. At the same time, in *Faith and Knowledge* Hegel makes no pretense of explaining Kant's insistence. Instead, he presents Kant's position as the result of a choice on Kant's part to remain with "appearances" by affirming the absolute finitude and discursiveness of the human intellect.<sup>38</sup>

In Hegel's more mature formulations of his philosophy, the historical and systematic context shifts, but he continues the critical appropriation of Kant's account of teleology in nature.<sup>39</sup> Hegel's renewed reading of Aristotle (and no longer Spinoza) now looms over his interpretation of Kant's account, which he uses as a springboard for the elaboration of

33. *ibid.*, 338.

34. *Ibid.*, 341.

35. Hegel traces Kant's ultimate failure to accept the objectivity of teleological judgments to his erroneous identification of "the Spinozistic unity" with an "abstract unity of the understanding" rather than "the organic unity" of an intuitive understanding; see Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 342.

36. *Ibid.*, 340f.

37. *Ibid.*, 342.

38. *Ibid.*, 341.

39. See Düsing, "Naturteleologie und Metaphysik bei Kant und Hegel," 148, for references to Hegel's discussion of teleology in the Jena writings, the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, and the *Nürnberg Propädeutic*.

his own speculative conception of life as "the Idea in its immediacy."<sup>40</sup> Thus, in the *Encyclopedia* he maintains that Kant, with the concept of inner purposiveness, "has reawakened the Idea in general and the idea of life in particular," originally elaborated by Aristotle.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* he notes with approval Kant's account of a natural purpose as an "intrinsically organized product of nature," such that "its end or purpose is not outside it; and its inner purposiveness is such that in it something is end and means. It is the Aristotelian concept, the Idea."<sup>42</sup> Accordingly, Hegel maintains, in organic products of nature one observes "the immediate unity of concept and reality as something objective," where purpose is precisely the "indwelling concept" that in an organic being is also real.<sup>43</sup>

As can be gathered from the array of texts just cited, Kant's account of inner purposiveness in nature is in Hegel's mind nothing short of a disclosure of what Hegel understands as the "Idea." Hegel calls the unity of concept and reality the "Idea" and their immediate unity, or the Idea in its immediacy, "life." Thus, in practically a paraphrase of Kant's definition of the principle of inner purposiveness, cited earlier,<sup>44</sup> Hegel characterizes life or the Idea in its immediacy as "the concept . . . that pervades its objectivity and as an end unto itself has in that objectivity its means and posits that objectivity as its means, but is immanent in this means, and in that objectivity is the realized end, identical with itself."<sup>45</sup> The contention that Kant's principle of inner purposiveness revives the Aristotelian conception of life betrays just how radically Hegel is reinterpreting that account even as he appropriates it. For Hegel, life or the Idea in its immediacy is an ontological category, characterizing the status of organic entities in themselves, quite apart from their relation to a potential observer or researcher. For Kant, however, inner purposiveness is nothing more than a principle for reflective judgment, that is to say, a maxim for the working scientist who is searching for some rule to explain a given natural phenomenon or object, namely, organic entities, when no mechanical explanation succeeds. Use of this principle does not, Kant contends, result in knowledge of the ontological status of organic entities or in an adequate grasp of the causality involved.

Hegel's argument for rejecting Kant's contention, while only implicit in *Faith and Knowledge*, is spelled out in the *Encyclopedia*. The principle

40. See Hegel's comments to this effect in the *Wissenschaft der Logik*, cited at the outset of the present essay.

41. *Enzyklopädie*, §204 *Zusatz*, 210; see also §360 *Zusatz*, 361.

42. Hegel, *Werke*, XX, 378f.

43. *Ibid.*, 378, 381.

44. See note 15 above.

45. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 177.

of inner purposiveness, Hegel observes, supersedes oppositions that define the discursive intellect, notably, the opposition between the universal and the particular and between subjectivity and objectivity. Hence, Hegel charges, Kant cannot legitimately identify the principle of inner purposiveness as something only subjective, as merely a way for a discursive intellect to entertain certain things.<sup>46</sup>

Kant grounds the principle of inner purposiveness, it must be remembered, in the discursive, finite character of the human intellect and its inability otherwise to make sense of the distinctive behavior of organic entities. By contrast, Hegel adopts Kant's idea of an intuitive understanding as a description of the very way we observe and comprehend organic entities.<sup>47</sup> In other words, for Hegel an intuitive understanding is not a mere thought, a corollary to the use of the principle of inner purposiveness, but the very way we know natural purposes. In this regard he chides Kant for not appreciating the fact that contained in the idea of an intuitive intellect is "the thought of another relation of the universal of the intellect to the particular of intuition" than obtains in theoretical or practical reason.<sup>48</sup> That other relation is not one of subsumption, but of an unfolding, necessary concretization, as elaborated in Hegel's own philosophy of nature. Moreover, as Hegel himself insists, that philosophical elaboration, far from being a departure from the observable order of things, "must be in conformity with the experience of nature."<sup>49</sup> Hegel's philosophy of nature is, to be sure, in no way an empirical science. Yet he insists that empirical, natural sciences must be presupposed by a philosophy of nature bent on contemplating nature "in its own, immanent necessity."<sup>50</sup>

Not surprisingly, Hegel criticizes Kant's treatment of the antinomy of teleological judgment. According to Kant, as noted above, the antinomy disappears as soon as it is recognized that mechanism and teleolo-

46. *Enzyklopädie*, §58, 95.

47. Hegel, *Werke*, XX, 381: "Wir betrachten es nach der Weise eines intuitiven Verstandes." This endorsement of an intuitive understanding cannot mean, after 1803 or so, that Hegel is positing an intellectual intuition. Given his criticism of this notion in Fichte and Schelling, it would seem more appropriate to interpret his claim that we regard organic nature "according to the manner of an intuitive intellect" as an attempt to use Kant's language against him, as part of an effort to demonstrate that, contra Kant, the intellect of human beings is not restricted by its discursivity. However, according to the mature Hegel, the human mind moves beyond the limitations of discursivity, not by means of an intellectual intuition, but rather by means of dialectical reasoning.

48. *Enzyklopädie*, §56, 94f., and §58 *Zusatz*, 95.

49. *Enzyklopädie*, §246 *Zusatz*, 236.

50. *Enzyklopädie*, §246, 236. For a detailed and helpful review of the different readings of the import of the empirical, natural sciences for Hegel's philosophy of nature, see Alison Stone, *Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel's Philosophy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005).

gy are principles of reflective judgment, subjectively valid maxims and not propositions about the objective constitution of things. In the *Science of Logic* Hegel objects that this recourse to maxims leaves the fundamental contradiction in place. Rather than resolve the basic antinomy or, what is Hegel's own alternative, recognize this opposition both in the world and in the mind, Kant attributes the opposition to the mind alone (namely, the mind of the researcher or scientist alone). In effect, Hegel claims, Kant forces the student of nature to shelve the question of the truth and objective determination of things and he does so precisely by refusing to confront the opposition between mechanism and teleology in the world itself. Kant betrays, Hegel mockingly observes, far "too great a sensitivity to the world."<sup>51</sup>

Thus, for Hegel the contrast between mechanism and teleology is not simply about ways of understanding organic entities, but about the ontological make-up of those entities themselves. However honestly intended, the refuge Kant takes in maxims of reflective judgment dodges this fundamental issue. As noted earlier, Kant construes the principle of inner purposiveness as a maxim because, among other reasons, of an attachment to the primacy of mechanical explanations and a failure to give such explanations of organic entities. And, indeed, Hegel can concur with Kant's declaration that "it is absurd . . . to hope that another Newton could sometime emerge who would make even the mere generation of a blade of grass understandable according to laws of nature which no intention has ordered."<sup>52</sup> Precisely from this concurrence, however, Hegel draws the inference that it is incumbent on anyone who would understand organic entities to identify their purposes or ordering principles. For Hegel, in other words, no mechanist principles, even such as are presently hidden, can provide an adequate explanation of organic entities. The only adequate explanation is a teleological one and it can be given—without recourse to some occult or unobservable property—by "thoughtfully observing" the processes of formation of the individual organism ("the living individual") as a whole.<sup>53</sup>

## Contemporary Biology and the Teleological Difference

In order for Kant's and Hegel's views on teleology in nature to be related even superficially to the philosophy of biology today, certain obvious caveats are in order. Kant's and Hegel's accounts of organic nature

51. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 232; *Enzyklopädie*, §48 *Zusatz*, 84f.; Düsing, "Naturteleologie und Metaphysik bei Kant und Hegel," 151f.

52. *KU* 400.

53. *Enzyklopädie*, §249, 238f.; §§343–49, 287–91.



are limited by their knowledge and appreciation of the biological sciences in their respective times. Kant was clearly not as sympathetic to, and Hegel not as informed about, developments among their contemporaries in biology as one might have wished.<sup>54</sup> In addition, Kant and Hegel respectively embed their conceptions of natural purposes in systematic philosophical accounts (a critical or transcendental philosophy, on the one hand, and a science of logic and philosophy of nature, on the other). By contrast, contemporary philosophy of biology is largely motivated by and articulated in terms of developments in biology itself. Indeed, there is still something novel about philosophy of biology in the present day as it tries to assert itself in the context of a philosophy of science dominated by the paradigms of physics. Above all, however, contemporary biological thought is shaped by several achievements in evolutionary and molecular research, the earliest of which occurred almost thirty years after Hegel's death, namely, Darwin's publication of *The Origin of Species* in 1859, the rediscovery of Mendel and Weismann's account of germ plasma at the turn of the century, population genetics, and the discovery of the structure of deoxyribonucleic acid in 1953.

With these caveats in mind, it remains instructive, both from a historical and a systematic point of view, to consider the similarities and dissimilarities in Kant's and Hegel's approaches to the study of organic entities against the backdrop of contemporary biological thinking. For all their fundamental differences, Kant's and Hegel's approaches exhibit some basic similarities. Four similarities stand out in particular.

First, both thinkers in their own respective times endorse the thesis, forcefully advanced by F. J. Ayala and Ernst Mayr, of the irreducibility of the principles, theory, or explanation of organic processes to those of physico-chemical processes; in contemporary terms, the thesis of biology's autonomy with respect to physics.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, while Kant may be seen

54. Kant does not consider the chemistry of his day, let alone the biology (or psychology), to be a legitimate "science"; see *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaften* (1786) in *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, IV, 471. But this work is by no means his final word on his conception of the possibilities for chemistry, particularly as his knowledge of the "chemical revolution" during his era increases; for a valuable overview and assessment, see Michael Friedman, *Kant and the Exact Sciences* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 264–90. For a useful survey of Kant's well-read, but unsympathetic views of biology, see Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgment*, 189–213; see, too, Timothy Lenoir, "Kant, Blumenbach and Vital Materialism in German Biology," *Isis* 71 (1980): 77–108. For comparable information on the sometimes limited sources of Hegel's understanding of biology, see the extensive notes by M. J. Petry in his translation, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*, 3 vols. (New York: Humanities Press; London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1970).

55. Ernst Mayr, *Toward a New Philosophy of Biology*, 18: "The conceptual framework of biology is entirely different from that of the physical sciences and cannot be reduced to it. The role that such biological processes as meiosis, gastrulation, and predation play in the life of an organism cannot be described by reference only to physical laws or chemical re-



as hedging his endorsement at times, Hegel's conception of nature as "a living whole" and the organic as its "ideal unity" anticipates calls for considering biology the unifying center of all natural sciences.<sup>56</sup>

Second, while the autonomy both thinkers accord biology is due to the purposiveness that they ascribe to organic behavior, neither Kant nor Hegel construes purposiveness in such a way that some nonexistent future is regarded as the cause of the present. This typical criticism of traditional teleology simply cannot be applied without further ado to Kant or Hegel.<sup>57</sup> Thus, according to Kant an organic entity possesses within itself from the outset "a self-reproducing, formative power" (*sich fortpflanzende bildende Kraft*).<sup>58</sup> Similarly, Hegel characterizes "needs" and "urges" as the examples of purpose nearest at hand.<sup>59</sup>

Third, in order to understand organic nature both Kant and Hegel make use of what might be considered anthropomorphisms, but in a way that is self-conscious and controlled.<sup>60</sup> Thus, just as Mayr argues that biologists can use terms like "purposive" or "goal-directed" without implying a transfer of human qualities, so Kant emphasizes that, as a guide to research, the concept of a thing as a natural purpose can be entertained "according to a distant analogy with our causality in terms of purposes."<sup>61</sup> In a comparable way, Hegel depicts the form of the plant organism as "not yet liberated from individuality to subjectivity," while the animal organism is the subjectivity whose concept, however, is "in itself, but not"—like that of a human being—"for itself."<sup>62</sup>

While these first three similarities are, as noted, echoed in much re-

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actions, even though physico-chemical principles are operant. The broader processes that these biological concepts describe simply do not exist outside the domain of the living world." See also Mayr, *Toward a New Philosophy of Biology*, 10f.; F. J. Ayala, "Biology as an Autonomous Science," *American Scientist* 56 (1968): 207–21; and Michael Ruse, *Philosophy of Biology Today* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 7f.

56. *Enzyklopädie*, §§251f., 241f.; see G. G. Simpson, *This View of Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1964), 107: "Biology, then, is the science that stands at the center of all science, and it is here, in the field where all the principles of all the sciences are embodied, that science can truly become unified."

57. For the view that teleology implies the future determining the past, see Michael Ruse, *Philosophy of Biology Today*, 44; for the contrary view, compatible with Kant's and Hegel's positions, see Larry Wright, *Teleological Explanations: An Etiological Analysis of Goals and Functions* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1976), 10: "There is nothing in any of the ordinary ascriptions of goals or functions or motives or purposes or aims or drives or needs or intentions which requires us to reverse the normal cause-before-effect sequence."

58. *KU* 374.

59. *Enzyklopädie*, §204 Zusatz, 209ff.

60. Wright defends such expressions as useful and appropriate metaphors, specifically "dead anthropomorphic metaphors"; see *Teleological Explanations*, 14–21.

61. *KU* 375; Mayr, *Toward a New Philosophy of Biology*, 40f.

62. *Enzyklopädie*, §345, 349f., and §§374–6, 374f.; see also *Enzyklopädie*, §248 Zusatz, 237f.

flection on biology today, a fourth similarity puts Kant and Hegel in stark contrast to contemporary thought. Not surprisingly, perhaps, this fourth similarity concerns their views on evolution. Both thinkers reject evolutionary theories of their respective eras, at least insofar as they were aware of them.<sup>63</sup>

As early as 1775, Kant dismisses—without explanation—both the idea that new species emerge and the notion that chance or “general mechanical laws” could produce the adaptations observable among organic entities. From this dismissal he then infers that such adaptations must be regarded as prefigured (*vorgebildet*).<sup>64</sup> A decade later, Kant reiterates his rejection of the thesis of species mutation, this time with the explanation that the thesis disables any attempt to determine what is “original” in nature and transgresses “the limits of reason,” since it cannot be established by experiment, but only by “snatching up occasional perceptions.”<sup>65</sup> In the *Critique of Judgment* Kant justifies his rejection with the observation that, as far as our experiential acquaintance with nature is concerned, such a *generatio heteronyma* is nowhere to be found.<sup>66</sup>

Hegel, it bears noting, seems to have been much more sanguine than Kant about the possibility of evolution in the manner that Darwin would later present it. Hegel's conception of how a biologist might plausibly understand evolution stems apparently from Voigt's *Lehrbuch der Botanik*. According to Voigt there is an evolution, but it is not the presupposition but rather the result of a basic organization of nature.<sup>67</sup> To what extent Hegel endorses Voigt's views is unclear, but in any event his quarrel is not with the reality of species mutation, but with the claim that the history of this mutation provides an explanation. Nature, Hegel argues, “is to be regarded as a system of stages, such that one proceeds necessarily from the others,” but not such that the higher stage “was naturally born or produced” from the lower stages.<sup>68</sup>

Thus, in the end, again much like Kant, Hegel's difficulties with an evolutionary theory turn on its legitimacy as a scientific explanation. However, while Kant disputed its legitimacy on the basis of a lack of evidence and possibilities of experimentation, Hegel rejects evolutionary theory because it is not a science, but a history or narrative, telling us, to be sure, how something happened but not why. This last remark makes plain once more that, as basic as the four similarities between Kant's and

63. Petry, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*, vol. 3, pp. 229–31.

64. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, II, 434–35.

65. *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, VIII, 96f.

66. *KU* 419 n.

67. Olaf Breidbach, “Hegels Evolutionskritik,” in *Hegel-Studien* 22 (1987): 165–72. According to Breidbach, F. S. Voigt's *Lehrbuch der Botanik* appeared in Jena in 1808.

68. *Enzyklopädie*, §249, 238f.

Hegel's accounts of natural purposes are, Hegel appropriates Kant's account into an ontology profoundly alien to the originally transcendental framework of that account and into an epistemology (or theory of explanation) that does not construe observation in the restrictive sense that Kant does. For Hegel purposes in nature are observable, even though they are not the sort of properties that, like a color, may be read off the object or, like a length, measured by juxtaposition with another object.

Contemporary biology is dominated by evolutionary and molecular theories profoundly different from the conceptions of organic nature in the writings of Kant and Hegel. Yet, the neo-Darwinian synthesis is by no means monolithic and, while natural selection and genetic code are not disputed, their interpretation is hardly settled. In this last respect Hegel's critical appropriation of Kant's thinking about organic entities and their determination remains instructive.

In order to appreciate this instructiveness, it will be helpful to review Ernst Mayr's sketch of some basic features of the regnant paradigm in biology. As part of an attempt to clarify the use of purposive language in biology while distinguishing it from its pre-Darwinian ancestry, Mayr invokes a distinction between teleonomy and teleology. The distinction roughly parallels the difference between Kant's notions of inner purposiveness and an intuitive intellect.<sup>69</sup>

"Teleonomic" refers to organisms' goal-directed processes, which are based upon the operation of some program that is itself in part or entirely the product of natural selection.<sup>70</sup> By contrast "teleology" typically refers to cosmic teleology, namely, the belief that there is a force immanent in the world leading it to the "ultimate perfection of whatever telos the Creator had in mind."<sup>71</sup> While Mayr argues that teleonomic behavior must be countenanced, he is convinced that the accomplishments

69. Mayr, *Toward a New Philosophy of Biology*, 38–60; Mayr urges that the analysis of putatively teleological phenomena begin with the attempt to reclassify them into one of four divisions: teleomatic processes, teleonomic processes, adaptive systems, and cosmic teleology.

70. The term "teleonomic" was coined by Pittendrigh in 1958; see C. S. Pittendrigh, "Adaptation, Natural Selection and Behavior," in *Behavior and Evolution*, ed. A. Roe and G. G. Simpson (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1958), 390–416. The sorts of program that Mayr has in mind in regard to teleonomic behavior are all antecedent material conditions of that behavior. "The programs which control teleonomic processes in organisms are either entirely laid down in the DNA of the genotype (closed programs) or are constituted in such a way that they can incorporate additional information (open programs) (Mayr 1964), acquired through learning, conditioning, or other experiences. Most behavior, particularly in higher organisms, is controlled by such open programs." Mayr, *Toward a New Philosophy of Biology*, 49; see also Ernst Mayr, "The Evolution of Living Systems," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 51 (1964): 934–41. Thus, for example, an animal's tendency to escape predators is acquired through natural selection while the knowledge of which animals in its environs actually prey on it is learned.

71. Mayr, *Toward a New Philosophy of Biology*, 58f., 234, 244–54, 264.

of evolutionary biology eliminate any need for cosmic teleology.<sup>72</sup> The source of teleonomic behavior is not divine design, but rather a natural selection that is fully mechanistic though in a probabilistic, not deterministic sense.

This last qualification is based in large part upon the belief that chance or spontaneous changes in a cell's genetic code (DNA) account for mutations and that, in Mayr's words, "the pathway from nucleic acids to proteins is a one-way street."<sup>73</sup> As Bernd-Olaf Koppers puts it: "The 'direction' of evolutionary processes depends decisively upon the microphysical mutation events, which on their part are completely indeterminate."<sup>74</sup> Mutation is essentially a change in the DNA sequence and this change is ultimately based, Koppers maintains, "upon quantum-mechanical uncertainty."<sup>75</sup>

In recent years, however, this view has been challenged on the basis of certain experiments by John Cairns and others with a strain of *Escherichia coli* (the bacteria in the human stomach). These experiments suggest that the cell's experience has an effect on its DNA. Unlike normal *E. coli*, the code of this strain is such that it is incapable of feeding on lactose. However, experiments show that, within two days, this strain of bacteria starts to feed on lactose, apparently "choosing" the appropriate mutation and thus "repairing" its defective gene.<sup>76</sup> Other experiments by the evolutionary biologist Barry G. Hall point to similar surprising conclusions about the adaptability of cells. Yet these conclusions are at odds with the established view that all mutation is random or, in other words, that a cell's experience cannot have any effect upon the sequence of bases in its DNA. Thus, while affirming that "nobody anymore doubts this stuff is real," Hall notes: "But nobody has a good explanation for it either."<sup>77</sup>

72. Ibid., 193: "All the phenomena that previously had been ascribed to design or to finalistic causes Darwin was able to explain in terms of natural selection"; *KU* 399: ". . . daß also die Teleologie keine Vollendung des Aufschlusses für ihre Nachforschungen, als in einer Theologie findet."

73. Mayr, *Toward a New Philosophy of Biology*, 538; see also *ibid.*, 33: "The occurrence of a given mutation is in no way related to the evolutionary needs of the particular organism or of the population to which it belongs."

74. Bernd-Olaf Koppers, *Information and the Origin of Life* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), 164.

75. Ibid., 167.

76. John Cairns, Julie Overbaugh, and Stephan Miller, "The origin of mutants," *Nature*, September 8, 1988, 142: "At the result of studies of bacterial variation, it is now widely believed that mutations arise continuously and without any consideration for their utility. In this paper we briefly review the source of this idea and then describe some experiments suggesting that cells may have mechanisms for choosing which mutations will occur." See also Boyce Rensberger, "Choosing the Right Mutation?" *Washington Post*, April 20, 1992.

77. Cited in Rensberger, "Choosing the Right Mutation?"

While these experiments and their theoretical context are vastly different from the considerations surrounding Hegel's critical appropriation of Kant's natural teleology, they obviously intersect in a fundamental way. The experiments by Cairns, Hall, and others suggest that the mixture of chance and mechanistic necessity posited by the contemporary synthesis of molecular and evolutionary biology, namely, random mutation, is in some cases an unlikely explanation for a cell's behavior. Is there any good reason not to entertain the hypothesis that this behavior is teleological (and not merely teleonomic)? To be sure, the development of this hypothesis would require the sort of synthesis of metaphysics and natural science broached by Hegel in his philosophy of nature, building upon the undeniable achievements of contemporary molecular and evolutionary biology that were unavailable to Hegel. What would be required, in other words, is a willingness to consider the possibility that some organic behaviors and, indeed, some mutations are based upon the purposive nature of the cell and not solely a matter of chance.

## Chapter 12

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# MARXIST IDEOLOGY AND FEUERBACH'S CRITIQUE OF HEGEL

*Feuerbach is the only one who has a serious and a critical relationship to the Hegelian dialectic, the only one who has made genuine discoveries in this area. In general, he has truly overcome the old philosophy.*—Karl Marx, *Paris Manuscripts*

Marx Wartofsky has made the question of ideology the focus of a recent study of Feuerbach's philosophical development.<sup>1</sup> As an exercise in what Wartofsky calls "historical epistemology," this study of Feuerbach is admirable for at least three reasons. First, Marxist and non-Marxist ideologies alike have too often relegated the integrity of Feuerbach's philosophical arguments to a way station on some march of dialectic from Hegel to Marx. Secondly, as Wartofsky ably demonstrates, Feuerbach's own trenchant self-criticism (or personal dialectic) and serious study of the problems of ideology and concept formation led to the critiques of Hegel's philosophy and of religion. Thirdly, for a Marxist-minded thinker such as Wartofsky, the question of ideology remains a pivotal yet perplexing issue, precisely in the wake of Marx's assessment of Feuerbach's achievements.

Marx seems to have construed ideology as a set of ideas, a human and mental product which reflects a reality. This mental production can genuinely mystify and distort our understanding of the reflected reality if the reflection is mistaken for the reality and given a life of its own over its producers. This is the religious model of ideology, originally fashioned by Hegel, which Marx adopted from Feuerbach and applied to capital as the prime mover of bourgeois political economy. Marx appreciated Feuerbach's extension of the model to Hegel's speculative philosophy but also rejected Feuerbach's passive materialism. Feuerbach's pas-

1. Marx W. Wartofsky, *Feuerbach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

sive materialism remains a mystifying set of ideas, in keeping with and ultimately acquiescing to the ideology of a bourgeois political economy. It bears noting that, in advancing this criticism, Marx cannot be presuming that all ideologies or mental productions are necessarily mystifying. For Marx's own *Das Kapital* is intended as a true reflection of capitalist political economy, corresponding to an efficacious and class-conscious conception of social reality.

Still, how does one know that an ideology is not mystifying, that its dialectic synthesizes theoretical and practical relations to a given reality and truly corresponds to revolutionary action? One classical response to this question consists in grounding the general features and processes of an ideology, i.e., its dialectic or logic, in similar features and processes of nature as a whole. Indeed, how can dialectic be genuinely critical if it is not founded in nature? Yet, on the other hand, how can dialectic as a logic of criticism and human discourse be imputed to nature? This issue, described here in Marxist terminology, is similar to traditional philosophical problems of relating consciousness (and its logic or methodology) to reality, however the latter be understood.<sup>2</sup> *Feuerbach* is Wartofsky's prolegomenon to a resolution of this problem in terms of a "critical materialism."<sup>3</sup>

Despite Feuerbach's numerous merits, it is not clear that Wartofsky has escaped being victim of an ideology which sabotages both his historical investigation and the project of a critical materialism from the outset. For in the final analysis Wartofsky has not provided a critical analysis of the foundation of Feuerbach's philosophical development. I am referring to Feuerbach's critique of Hegel's philosophy, which Wartofsky rightly construes as the catalyst to Feuerbach's development of a materialist humanism and as a cornerstone to Marx's own revolutionary materialism.

The following study aims to provide a critical analysis of Feuerbach's *Critique of Hegelian Philosophy* (1839), in the light of studies of the same by Wartofsky and others.<sup>4</sup> However, in issuing this analysis, my aim is

2. There are at least three traditional problems or, better, challenges for philosophical understanding here: the challenge of understanding mental consciousness or the mind in relation to the body (against the specter of dualism); the challenge of understanding knowing consciousness or knowledge of the material world (against the specter of skepticism); and the challenge of understanding acting consciousness or historical actions in relation to natural events (against the specter of determinism).

3. What "critical materialism" means and how the method of "historical epistemology" in *Feuerbach* contributes to its development is never clear; see my review of the book in *New Scholasticism* 54 (1980): 256–59.

4. Ludwig Feuerbach, "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie (1839)," in *Werke in sechs Bände, Band 3: Philosophische Kritik und Abhandlungen*, ed. Erich Thies (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), 7–53. Hereafter this text is referred to as *KHP*, followed by the page

neither simply to point out Wartofsky's ideological predilections nor to make some historical points. Rather I hope to suggest that subsequent Marxist difficulties with the relation of dialectic or logic and materialism, insofar as they uncritically accept Marx's favorable evaluation of Feuerbach's critique of Hegel, are rooted in an inadequate response to Hegel's philosophy.

Four basic criticisms dominate Feuerbach's *Critique of Hegelian Philosophy* and this study is accordingly divided into four sections corresponding to each criticism. Feuerbach's first criticism is directed at the absoluteness Hegel claims for his philosophy. After caricaturing the imperial character of history in Hegel's thought, Feuerbach charges that Hegel *uncritically* accepts an irrational concept of an incarnate absolute. Feuerbach's second major criticism concerns the purportedly presuppositionless beginning of the *Science of Logic*. That beginning, Feuerbach contends, has real and historical conditions. Feuerbach's third criticism is directed at the systematic character of Hegel's philosophy, a character Feuerbach finds both superfluous and destructive of scientific inquiry. In Feuerbach's final criticism, the inadequacy of Hegel's analysis of sense certainty is said to confirm that Hegel makes an unwarranted break with sense perception.

## The Irrationality of the Absolute Incarnate

Feuerbach begins the *Critique* of 1839 by contrasting Hegel's occidental fondness for historical difference and novelty with the more oriental insights of Schelling's philosophy of identity. Hegel's philosophy is, we are told, "an entomological spirit" existing in the linear dimension of time alone and suppressing the past's integrity and unity with the present in favor of some novel difference. This insect of a philosophy is both blind to the spatial (non-historical) expanse of nature and a parasite on existing individuals. "His system knows only subordination and succession, nothing of coordination and co-existence."<sup>5</sup>

In this metaphorical manner Feuerbach challenges both the emphasis on novelty and the status of individuals in Hegel's conception of his-

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number. For a translation of "Vorläufige Thesen zur Reformation der Philosophie," see *The Young Hegelians*, ed. Lawrence Stepelevitch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 156-71. In addition to Wartofsky's book, noteworthy studies of Feuerbach in English include Sidney Hook, *From Hegel to Marx* (New York: Humanities Press, 1950); Louis Dupre, *The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966); Frederick M. Gordon, "The Contradictory Nature of Feuerbachian Humanism," *Philosophical Forum* 8 (1977): 31-47; and Howard Williams, "Feuerbach and Hegel," *Idealistic Studies* (1978): 136-56.

5. KHP8.



tory. The charge that Hegel finds only novelty in history, however, is difficult to accept. Although Hegel's description and use of the term *Aufhebung* is not easily grasped or maintained, the basic message is clear. Reality is neither sheer novelty nor sheer replication of the past. Furthermore, Hegel's *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences* is an attempt to portray the structures of logic and of natural and spiritual realities lying beyond the ambience of history.

The validity of the related charge that individuals, past and contemporary, are eclipsed in the absoluteness Hegel attaches to a novel indifference depends on the conception of absolute *Geist*. However, one legitimate interpretation is that such a spirit at each moment exists only in the character and to the degree that artistic, religious, and philosophic self-consciousness is attained by socialized individuals. In retrospect the reflective individual finds a pattern to this development just as it finds patterns to natural and psychological development. This pattern, to the degree that it is true, must reflect some interpreting present. In other words, by this interpretation, Hegel's absolute spirit is the work of living and socially conscious human individuals.<sup>6</sup>

However, these initial criticisms should perhaps not be identified as Feuerbach's main arguments. As Wartofsky has quite ably shown, Feuerbach's first main argument in the 1839 critique is largely drawn from his work in the history of philosophy, particularly his studies of Leibniz (1836) and Bayle (1838). In the Leibniz study Feuerbach develops his genetic-analytic method, designed to criticize ideologies through analysis of their development. In this fashion Feuerbach notes that critical advances in physics were made by de-anthropomorphizing concepts of nature. In the study of Bayle, Feuerbach attempts to demonstrate that ethics, like physics, achieves autonomy when similarly demythologized, i.e., when divorced from belief in the God of positive religion. At this juncture Feuerbach works out his influential criticism that the God of positive religion is itself a kind of anthropomorphism, a concept of human self-knowledge in alienated form.

Feuerbach extends this method of criticizing belief to Hegel's philo-

6. Hegel would seem to be making precisely this point in the transition from "Morality" to "Religion" in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*; see *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 441: "Das Wort der Versöhnung ist der *daseiende Geist*, der das reine Wissen seiner selbst als *allgemeinen Wesens* in seinem Gegenteile, in dem reinen Wissen seiner als der absolut in sich seienden *Einzelheit* anschaut,—ein gegenseitiges Anerkennen, welches der *absolute Geist* ist." In this context, after elaborating how forgiveness, self-renunciation, and reconciliation within a community define the existing spirit, Hegel identifies the "absolute spirit" with this mutual recognition. I am grateful to Tim Brownlee for pointing out the pertinence of this passage to the discussion in the body of the paper.

sophical concepts. Hegel's concept of the absolute is viewed as merely a secularized version of positive religion's God. As Wartofsky puts it:

Feuerbach's move is to note the formal similarity of the foundations of theology and the foundations of "Absolute" philosophy, namely, the irrational, uncritical, and uncriticized notion of an absolute, or unmediated *beginning*. Once the connection is made, then Feuerbach can draw on the whole arsenal of his critique of theology . . . and turn it, by an easy transformation, into the basis for a critique of philosophy itself. . . . Speculative philosophy is nothing but a form, albeit a disguised, rationally appearing form of theology itself.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, Feuerbach's view is that Hegel has uncritically adopted a conception of the absolute which transposes into philosophy the incarnation doctrine of theology. In theology or philosophy, the doctrine itself, Feuerbach contends, is irrational.

Hegel's *uncritical* acceptance of this concept of the absolute is evidenced by a failure to raise "the main question," viz., whether it is at all possible for the species to realize itself absolutely in an individual (or for philosophy to realize itself in a single philosopher).<sup>8</sup> Such a concept is *irrational* in the first place because it is only an object of reason, borrowing any distinctiveness or actuality from individuals that are objects of feeling beyond the threshold of reason. Secondly, were Hegel's concept of the absolute really significant, time and history would collapse into the absolute's incarnation in Hegel's philosophy.

*Incarnation and history are absolutely incompatible with one another. Where divinity itself enters into history, history ceases. If, however, history takes its course afterwards as before, then the theory of incarnation is refuted in fact by history itself.*<sup>9</sup>

Feuerbach's next move is "to anticipate rationally a time" when Hegel's philosophy, like any other, will be recognized as a passing expression of a bygone age.

Before turning to that anticipation, I would like to respond to the general criticism that Hegel uncritically accepts an irrational concept of the absolute. Hegel obviously did not presume that his philosophy of the absolute meant the extinction of time. Nor did he fail to see the time-boundedness of any conception of the absolute, including his own. However, these insights do not warrant the conclusion that the absolute is not to be conceived at all.

Moreover, Feuerbach's identification of Hegel's philosophy of the ab-

7. Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, 176.

8. KHP 10.

9. KHP 11f.

solute as a secularized form of the incarnation doctrine reflects a fundamental misunderstanding, apparently inherited by Marx, that for Hegel a God or reason, somehow articulated in the *Science of Logic*, exists independently of history. But such an interpretation is a myth foisted upon Hegel's doctrine of the absolute. Hegel's absolute is not the absolute idea—merely its logical form—but the absolute spirit. Absolute spirit is a self-conscious reflection (artistic, religious, philosophical) upon an individual and a socially determined consciousness with a definite history and natural foundation, a reflection that gives unity in real, historical time to that individual, personal consciousness (“subjective spirit”) and that communal consciousness (“objective spirit”).<sup>10</sup>

## Real and Temporal Conditions of the Presuppositionless Beginning

Wartofsky acknowledges shortcomings in this argument that Hegel's concept of the absolute must mean the end of history. However, Wartofsky urges that the preceding arguments set the stage for “the specific denial of the Hegelian claim to a presuppositionless beginning; thus, it is a critique of the Hegelian concept of *Being*.”<sup>11</sup> Incapable of a perspective beyond its own time, each philosophy appears to *itself* presuppositionless. Yet, as subsequent history shows, each philosophy remains bound to a given temporal condition, a fact no less true, Feuerbach insists, of Hegel's philosophical beginning with being, despite its logical—pre-temporal—cast.<sup>12</sup>

Feuerbach argues for the conditioned, temporally determined character of Hegel's beginning with being in a variety of ways. First, he questions why philosophy's beginning should have the particular significance of “the in itself or something scientifically first.” Subsequently he argues that this is simply “a beginning determined by the standpoint of philosophy before Hegel,” whose “interest was essentially only systematic and formal.”<sup>13</sup> He follows up this argument with another query: why begin with the concept of being rather than with actual being?<sup>14</sup> This second inquiry puts the science of logic, as Hegel's systematic beginning, in question. Much like Trendelenburg, though before him, Feuerbach in-

10. The logical form is a real, although not temporally bound constituent of spirituality. Indeed, the human being is a logical animal. But the real foundation of the logical form is not the disembodied idea, but the spirit, a natural and historical entity. For an interpretation of the relation obtaining between Hegel's logic and his *Realphilosophie* along these lines, see the essay “Hegel's Science of Logic and Idea of Truth” in the present volume.

11. Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, 178.

13. *KHP* 15: 29f.; 36–42.

12. *KHP* 14.

14. *KHP* 14: 26.

sists that tacit appeal is actually made to a sensible being in Hegel's purportedly logical work.<sup>15</sup> Thirdly, perhaps showing the influence of his earlier dissertation,<sup>16</sup> Feuerbach questions why reason is not made the beginning of the system since being, as an object of logic, immediately forces us to turn to reason.<sup>17</sup>

In response to the first question, there are undoubtedly historical reasons for Hegel's beginning with being *in addition to* the reasons he gives at the outset of the *Science of Logic*. In the *Anmerkungen* that follow his account of being, nothing, and becoming, Hegel explicitly notes historical connections to Parmenides and others. However, the mere historical note that Hegel belongs to a tradition of systematic thinkers hardly refutes the legitimacy of systematic thinking.<sup>18</sup>

In response to both the first and second questions, it is evident that being as initially defined is *not* the real beginning or first principle of philosophic reflection. Being is equivalent to nothing, logically speaking, and that equivalence is logically determinate in the concept of becoming. In short, the real beginning or first principle is not immediately or intuitively present to the discursive and finite mind.

If by "actual being," however, Feuerbach means particular beings and historical data—and apparently he does since he later states: "only *determinate* being is being"<sup>19</sup>—the criticism still misses the mark. For Hegel requires of the working philosophical scientist a thorough acquaintance with such particulars.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, he points out that his science of logic

15. *KHP* 26; 33–35.

16. Feuerbach's dissertation, *De ratione, una, universali, infinita* (1828), was composed to refute the view that because human reason is a property of an individual it is incapable of comprehending any objective truth. Feuerbach argues that both formally and materially (in regard to thinking and knowing) there is a universality and even unlimitedness to reason. Ludwig Feuerbach, "Über die Vernunft (1828)," in *Werke in sechs Bände, Band 1: Frühe Schriften*, ed. Erich Thies (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), 15–76. I agree with Wartofsky that the dissertation is "an explicitly rationalist-idealist work" but I have my doubts that it is a "thoroughly Hegelian exercise." In the first place Feuerbach sets up a dichotomy between the privacy of sensibility and the publicity of thinking. Not only are the processes of sensation, sensible consciousness, and perception which Hegel carefully distinguishes roughly equated by Feuerbach, but the very dichotomy is inconsistent with Hegel's account of reason's development from sensibility. Indeed, strict adherence to the language of Hegel's philosophy of spirit would dictate that the spirit and not reason is truly one, infinite, and universal. There are other problems with the dissertation as well, especially Feuerbach's complete submersion of the individual in thinking ("In that I think I am no longer an individual," *ibid.*, 18) and his way of rendering thinking and self-consciousness equivalent ("No thinking without self-consciousness and no self-consciousness with thinking," *ibid.*, 28), both theses which Hegel would, in my opinion, deny.

17. *KHP* 14.

18. Williams, however, apparently finds this argument of Feuerbach's cogent; see Williams, "Feuerbach and Hegel," 146f.

19. *KHP* 27f.

20. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 5f. (*HPS*, 3).

is more understandable to those who have worked through natural sciences and studies of consciousness.<sup>21</sup> Also, he refers to the history of philosophy as “the empirical proof” of the science of logic.<sup>22</sup> The scientific presentation is not the same as the work of discovery and theoretical reconstruction, but it is just as essential. Hence, at least from this perspective, Feuerbach’s criticism, apparently endorsed by Wartofsky, seems ill-conceived.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, when Feuerbach urges that the beginning might just as well be reason on the grounds that reason is the real and presuppositionless foundation of logic, he misrepresents the role of Hegel’s science of logic. Feuerbach presumes that Hegel conceives the content of the *Science of Logic* as ontologically prior to the content of the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit. Feuerbach’s own views are not fully developed in his critique of Hegel but it would appear that Feuerbach denies what he imputes to Hegel on the grounds that the system collapses into the ambience of history. However, for Hegel philosophy is not identical to the underlying reality, viz., the spirit, but is only a form of the spirit.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, a science of logic is merely the most abstract form of the latter. The absolute spirit, actually present in history, is *absolutely* prior to philosophy. Yet the priority of the spirit’s actual historical presence in no way excludes the possibility of abiding and essential features of that presence. As Hegel repeatedly insists, the thoughtful consideration of these features is precisely what distinguishes the philosopher from the historian.<sup>25</sup>

The real foundation of Hegel’s philosophic system in all its investigations—logical, natural, spiritual—is the actuality of the absolute spirit. Not a time-less set of categories, but the historical emergence and ongoing re-emergence of conscious beings capable of *conceiving* their history is the actual beginning. In a negative sense the *Science of Logic* is a critique of logical conceptions taken as absolute *apart* from this underlying reality. In a positive sense, the *Science of Logic* is an abstract expression of this underlying reality. From *this* logical point of view, the measure of legitimacy of being, essence, and several other concepts is demonstrated.<sup>26</sup>

21. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 42 (HSL, 58).

22. Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 119.

23. KHP 44; Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, 192f.

24. Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, 39.

25. G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1967), 20–24; *Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 15–18.

26. Feuerbach’s criticism, in the final pages of KHP, that Hegel has failed to investigate the category of nothing in a genetically critical fashion is thus disarmed as well. As with other categories, Hegel is not denying the use of the concept in experiences. However,

Thus, in one sense Hegel would quite agree that the beginning of the *Science of Logic*, viz., being, is really mediated and rests upon intuitions as Feuerbach (along with Trendelenburg and Kierkegaard) argues. But this mediation and intuition are acts of a spirit emergent from nature and it is to a consideration of the processes and structures of this reality that Hegel is trying to turn our heads. Ever the pedagogue, Hegel presents the simplest and most abstract expression of this reality at the outset of his system.

### The Superfluous and Destructive Nature of Systematic Philosophy

In the course of criticizing Hegel's claim to a presuppositionless beginning, Feuerbach argued that affiliation with a philosophic tradition undermines that claim. His next major criticism challenges the systematic character of the philosophic tradition epitomized by Hegel. "The Hegelian philosophy is the culmination point of speculatively systematic philosophy."<sup>27</sup> As far as Feuerbach is concerned, however, "speculatively systematic philosophy" is superfluous and a hindrance to the development of knowledge.

In presenting his charge that the system is superfluous, Feuerbach claims that systematic thinking is not "the essential thinking but only thinking exhibiting itself."<sup>28</sup> The temporal character of the exhibition purportedly negates insights which claim to transcend mere successive-ness. Feuerbach correctly notes that the exhibition of categories in the *Science of Logic* leads its reader in a sense back to the beginning, to an immediacy which joins in an *idea* the process of mediation described in the *Science of Logic*. This fact evidences to Feuerbach that "inner thoughts" or an "inner act of knowledge" constitute the sole and independent reference of the systematic thinking in the *Science of Logic*.<sup>29</sup>

Having affirmed the dubious point that the exhibition of thought is superfluous and private thinking essential, Feuerbach argues further that any validity to the exhibition derives from language as "the realization of the species, mediation of the I and Thou."<sup>30</sup> In other words, the system is superfluous because, in comparison with the truth of inner thoughts, the system is always socially derivative and linguistically relative. The types of demonstration and syllogism are thus not *forms of rea-*

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he is recognizing and subjecting to analysis their unrestricted character as thoughts. That universality, moreover, both constitutes and evidences spirituality. See *KHP* 44–51.

27. *KHP* 24.

28. *KHP* 16.

29. *KHP* 17.

30. *KHP* 18.

son in themselves, not forms of the inner act of thinking and knowledge; they are only forms of communication, types of expression, exhibitions and representation, appearances of thought.<sup>31</sup> This insistence on the socially derivative qua linguistic character of demonstration has at least two edges to it. In the first place, Feuerbach is urging that any force attaching to Hegel's account of logical categories is derivative of the social character of language and *not vice versa*.<sup>32</sup> Secondly, because the words designate only forms of communication and because Hegel must first think what he vainly attempts to present, the system, including the *Science of Logic*, is an artificial contrivance.<sup>33</sup> "The proof of the absolute," Feuerbach argues, "has essentially only a *formal* significance," since "for Hegel *the thinker* the absolute idea was an absolute certainty, for Hegel *the writer* a formal uncertainty."<sup>34</sup>

Feuerbach is correct when he observes that the idea at the end of the *Science of Logic* sums up the argument in that work. But this observation hardly warrants his conclusion that "inner thoughts" constitute the sole reference of the systematic thinking in the *Science of Logic* and that, for that reason, the systematic presentation is superfluous. The actual reference for the *Science of Logic* is once again the absolute spirit, whose domain is public as well as private. Furthermore, the fact that Hegel had first to think being before he committed it to words in no way confounds being's logical status as the first and most immediate category in a science of logic.

Insofar as the *Science of Logic* is ultimately based on the absolute spirit which expresses a communal consciousness, the socio-linguistic character of logical categories is hardly denied by Hegel. Hegel even argues that a science of logic does not require the invention of a formal language since logical categories are naturally expressed in ordinary language.<sup>35</sup> Yet the structures and processes constituting the absolute spirit

31. KHP 21.

32. KHP 18: "The significance of demonstration cannot be grasped without reference to the significance of language." See KHP 19.

33. KHP 24: "The thinking is earlier than the presenting of the thinking."

34. KHP 30: "The Hegelian philosophy, right in its beginning and point of departure, presents us with a contradiction, the contradiction between the essential and the formal, between thinking and writing."

35. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 10f. (HSL, 32). At the same time for Hegel thinking has a reality and objectivity apart from language. Feuerbach, on the other hand, asserts: "Communication of thoughts is not material or actual communication. A shove, the sound rattling my ears, or the light is a real communication. I passively take in and suffer what is material. But the spiritual is only there because of me, because of activity of myself. For this reason even what the demonstrator communicates is not the thing itself but only the means" (KHP 22). What Feuerbach here asserts is and is not real is, of course, quite arbitrary as far as the critique is concerned. Just as arbitrary are those claims based on this assertion of reality, such as that Hegel neglects real, secondary causes in favor of imagi-



and present to it on reflection are not all linguistic structures, however much they may be expressed by language. Logical, natural, and self-conscious structures make language possible even if language is essential to the recognition of these structures. Indeed, by collapsing all forms of reason into the contingencies of linguistic communities, Feuerbach and not Hegel appears guilty of absolutizing the form of presentation over the realities presented.

In these criticisms that the system is superfluous, Feuerbach is rehabilitating a dualism between thinking and a linguistic community. In effect, he absolutizes a psychological account of an individual's thoughts. "I convince myself of the truth of a thought only *through myself* . . . . The *primary*, the *a priori*, the basis to which everything refers and returns is the understanding."<sup>36</sup> A similar emphasis in Kant's writings Hegel flatly rejected, labeling its intrusion into philosophy "barbaric."<sup>37</sup> What is barbaric is the reduction of knowledge to opinion as if the criterion of truth resides solely and incommunicably in the privacy of one's sensations, perceptions, or thoughts.<sup>38</sup> *Opposite* the solitary thinker, however, and in apparent contradiction with the role he gives to private understanding, Feuerbach identifies the public domain of language as the sole guarantee of demonstration. "What is true is neither mine nor yours but *everyone's*" and demonstrations, such as attempted in the *Science of Logic*, are "not the relation of the thinker . . . to itself, but rather the relation of the thinker to others."<sup>39</sup>

Wartofsky himself acknowledges the problems involved in Feuerbach's claim for thinking's radical interiority as well as for the accompanying opposition of thinking and language.<sup>40</sup> Yet these problems appear to have no bearing on his estimation of Feuerbach's criticisms of Hegel based on these claims. My guess is that Wartofsky simply accepts the interpretation shared by Feuerbach and Marx that the *Science of Logic* is a tiresome metaphysical exercise intended to demonstrate structures and processes existing apart from nature and history in "the mind of God."<sup>41</sup>

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nary, primary causes and that the neglect demonstrates the lack of a genetically critical investigation (*KHP*, 43f., 51). However, these remarks by Feuerbach do illustrate a kind of dualism between a passive materialism and an active idealism in his thinking, thereby confirming Marx's reproaches in the first and fifth theses on Feuerbach.

36. *KHP* 17f.

37. Hegel, *Werke*, XX, 343, 385.

38. The opening chapter to Hegel's system, the first rung of the ladder to speculative knowledge, is precisely a criticism of these private and immediate criteria of what it means to-be-known (*Bewußt-sein*), i.e., what consciousness is. I am referring to the discussion of sense certainty, perception, and understanding in the chapter entitled "Consciousness" in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

39. *KHP* 20f.

40. Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, 186.

41. Hegel does say that the content of the *Logic* can be expressed as "the presentation



What is not recognized is that Hegel's concept of absolute spirit not only is a natural and historical being providing the foundation to the *Science of Logic*, but also that Hegel's concept of that spirit designates a reality which is private (subjective) and public (objective), thereby undercutting the feigned opposition between the interior act of thinking and its expression.

The preceding criticism suggests that for Feuerbach there is an unbridgeable gulf between the truth recognized in private reflection and its systematic expression and demonstration. "What the demonstrator communicates," Feuerbach insists, "is not the *thing itself* but only the means."<sup>42</sup> This dichotomy between thinking's privacy and language's public artificiality also underlies Feuerbach's charge that systems such as Hegel's retard the development of knowledge.

Each system which is not recognized and acquired as a mere *means*, *confines* and ruins the spirit because it puts the mediate, formal thinking in the place of the immediate, original, material thinking. It kills the spirit of discovery. It renders the distinction of the *spirit* from the *letter* impossible, because it is *necessary* that with the thought the *word* is also held fast—precisely in this regard the limit-*edness* of each system as an external existence reveals itself. Thus the original significance and determination of each expression of thought, of each system, is utterly denied and absent.<sup>43</sup>

I have already argued that the notion of "an immediate, original, material thinking" is flatly rejected by Hegel inasmuch as it suggests a purely private criterion of truth. I would like to turn now to the charge that a system "kills the spirit of discovery."

Several responses might be made to this criticism. It can be argued that Hegel's conclusion to his science of logic, viz., the unity of theory and practice in an idea, is in his own words merely a "method"; or that Hegel distinguishes the task of philosophy—the owl of Minerva—from the task of discovery in positive sciences. However, these responses are as dubious and murky, in my opinion, as Feuerbach's charge itself. A simpler and more adequate response is that discovery requires a matrix within which that discovery is determinate. Hegel's philosophy of absolute spirit provides such a matrix.

Unlike the strict rationalism Feuerbach imputes to Descartes and Spi-

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of God as it is in its eternal essence before the creation of the world and finite spirit." But it is only the presentation or, as he refers to it later, "the realm of shadows," the study of which is "the absolute education" of consciousness. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 34, 42 (*HSL*, 50, 58).

42. *KHP* 220.

43. *KHP* 23.

noza, Hegel grounds this matrix, even as a logical matrix, in a human-bound concept of absolute spirit. This spirit is not philosophy, although philosophy is a form of this spirit and hence as historically dependent as any other form of spirit. Accordingly Hegel does not view his own philosophical exhibition as complete and incapable of revision. To the contrary, in the introduction to the *Science of Logic* he observes that the work might be better organized.<sup>44</sup>

The structures and processes that abide in historical development, be they natural or spiritual, remain the focus of the philosopher. Yet the philosopher only finds these in history just as his conceptions are tied to a history. Given this state of affairs only a concept such as that of absolute spirit provides a matrix for a science of wisdom. For the wisdom Hegel offers is one that jointly respects history and philosophy. In reality there is no simple collapse of the structures unearthed by science and propounded by culture (including philosophical systems) into some irrational chronos. Yet in reality, too, there is a sense in which history remains, as Robert Lowell put it so eloquently, "what we cannot touch."

History, composed of living individuals, is neither a poor copy of a prehistoric divine mind nor a test-tube Wunderkind of mindless nature. History comes to be with the birth of consciousness (and not, of course, as if that is all there is to it). Accompanying the birth of consciousness, however, is a contrivance of some identity or universality the validation of which depends on a practical relation to history. "Practical" in this connection has a range of meanings, from experimentation in natural science and human relations to technological efforts and an artist's mastery of several traditions. What Hegel's concept of absolute spirit provides is a means of *conceiving* the emergence of consciousness, in all its varieties and degrees, from nature. That concept is traditional yet it takes its stand—as it must—in the present. That present is laden with intentionality, with a purposive and unfinished character that provides the critical measure of logical, natural, and spiritual investigations.<sup>45</sup>

44. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 38 (HSL, 54).

45. Indeed, Feuerbach construes Hegel's concept of the absolute as a synthesis of Fichtean idealism and Schelling's philosophy of nature, but the resulting absolute, in Feuerbach's opinion, is a useless and abstract unity of spirit and nature. "Spirit and nature are only predicates, terminations, forms of one and the same, the absolute. But, what then is the absolute? Nothing but the *And*, the unity of spirit and nature. But have we thereby made any progress? Did we not already have this unity in the concept of nature itself?" (KHP 39). Yet these very claims on Feuerbach's part presume there is no alternative to either idealism or the materialism he adopts. "There is no science of the absolute as such but rather afterwards as before a science of the absolute as nature or of the absolute as spirit" (KHP 40). Feuerbach once again betrays his identification of Hegel's absolute with the idea of the absolute.

## The Unwarranted Break with Perception

Initially Feuerbach criticized the overriding weight of *history* in Hegel's philosophy ("an entomological spirit"). Yet he also attacks the superfluousness and destructiveness of the *system* with its pretensions to a presuppositionless beginning and to absolute knowledge. Although it is not immediately apparent how these criticisms can be equally valid, together they point, in Feuerbach's estimation, to a basic flaw in Hegel's philosophy. As did Fichte, Hegel begins with a contradiction he never resolves, the contradiction between the abstractions of the understanding and the concreteness of sensible and historical experience. In the Cartesian tradition, Hegel is guilty of assuming "an unmediated break with sensible intuition and an immediate presupposition for philosophy."<sup>46</sup>

The *Phenomenology of Spirit* provides no counterargument to this charge, according to Feuerbach, since the *Science of Logic* is supposed to make an utterly new beginning. The attempts to unravel the relation between Hegel's two chief works are legion and it would be inappropriate to add to their number in the present paper. (However, Feuerbach fails to mention that Hegel explicitly refers to the *Phenomenology* as, in a certain sense, a presupposition to the *Logic*. Indeed, Hegel acknowledges several sorts of presuppositions to the *Logic*, which would lead one to believe that Hegel's claim to a presuppositionless beginning is not to be taken in an unqualified sense.) Feuerbach probably recognized that the relation between Hegel's chief works is too complicated for his argument to be convincing. For he proceeds to another objection, an objection that focuses on the *Phenomenology* (which may or may not signal Feuerbach's appreciation of this work's significance for the *Logic* in Hegel's eyes). Feuerbach questions whether Hegel's argument at the outset of the *Phenomenology* is in fact "a dialectical refutation of the reality of the sensible consciousness."<sup>47</sup>

Feuerbach caricatures Hegel's opening argument in the *Phenomenology* as follows: "My brother is called 'John,' 'Adolph,' but yet in addition to him countless others also are and are called 'John,' 'Adolph.' But does it follow from that, that my John is no reality, that Johnness is a truth?"<sup>48</sup> As Wartofsky puts it, Feuerbach accepts Hegel's critique of "talk about the sense awareness of particulars, but charges him with confusing the limits of talking about this sense awareness with the limits of this sense awareness itself."<sup>49</sup> Thus, Feuerbach insists that the *Phenomenology of Spirit* "begins not with what is other than thought, but rather with the thought of what is other than thought."<sup>50</sup>

46. KHP 32.

48. KHP 34.

50. KHP 36.

47. KHP 33f.

49. Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, 190.

However, the *Phenomenology* is precisely a study of forms of consciousness, literally forms of *known-being* (*Bewußt-sein*). The point of Hegel's discussion is simply to discredit any claim that something is *known* in a *solely immediate* fashion. Taking *claims* of sense certainty as a paradigm, Hegel is attacking the view that some claims or expressions can be shown to be true in any immediate fashion. Hegel does not deny the reality of the individual or the role of sensation. In fact, he does not even make the claim—imputed to him by Feuerbach—of providing a dialectical refutation of “the reality of the sensible consciousness.” Rather he merely points up the inadequacy of sense certainty as the sole foundation of the truth of claims made about the individual and about sensible experience.

Wartofsky admits that Feuerbach's critique of sense certainty forces Feuerbach into an embarrassing silence, and that in the end Feuerbach's treatments of sensation and the individual are themselves untenable.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, once again, such shortcomings do not prompt Wartofsky to reconsider the critique of Hegel's philosophy.

Marx and Feuerbach shared what I have argued is the mistaken belief that Hegel identified what was absolute with his system of philosophy and especially with the absolute idea in his *Science of Logic*. Marx, to his credit, recognized that Feuerbach's critique of this mythical Hegel involved Feuerbach in a hopeless dichotomy between sensibility and rationality. This dichotomy in turn resurrected theology in anthropological form and reflected an insensitivity to the human practice at the base of social structures. Thus dissociating himself from Feuerbach, Marx found Hegel's method increasingly helpful in his science of capitalist political economy. The problem which has remained for Marxist thinkers is the grounding of that method in such a way that dogmatism does not replace scientific inquiry, does not distort historically unique situations, and does not destroy the spontaneous actions of people. Might it not be the case that the utility of Hegel's method for Marx is due precisely to its grounding in the concept of spirit, in the concept of a historical self-expression achieved in art, religion, and philosophy, both resulting from and explaining a unity—indeed, a revolutionary unity—of personal and social consciousness?<sup>52</sup>

51. Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, 341f.; 367–86.

52. This last suggestion is not made in ignorance of the fact that Hegel's method was useful to Marx because it aped the process of capital reproducing and expanding itself in the political economy. Yet Hegel's concept of spirit, I am suggesting, provides just the sort of conception of personal and social identity and action that Marx's active materialism must presuppose and recognize. See Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (Berlin: Dietz, 1974), 22f., 309ff.; see, too, Patrick Murray's insightful discussion of Hegel's absolute idealism as the philosophical reflection of the logic of capital in *Marx's Theory of Scientific Knowledge* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1988), 212–20.

## Chapter 13

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### HUMAN NATURE AND THE POST-HISTORICAL CRISIS OF RECOGNITION

The very existence of the United States in the world at the present time, Alexandre Kojève observed in 1968, prefigures the future, the eternal present of humanity as a whole. The American way of life is, in his words, the genre of life proper to “the post-historical period” signaling nothing less than the end of history as we know it: the consummation of the human, all-too-human struggle for recognition, on the one hand, and a return to the world of animals, on the other.<sup>1</sup> In his book, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Francis Fukuyama takes pains to point out certain tensions within liberal democracies that have been ignored or underestimated by Kojève, yet have the potential to wreak havoc on these governments and the American way of life they are meant to protect and shepherd. *The End of History* concludes with an impressive litany of doubts about the sustainability and desirability of liberal democracy or “political liberalism,” defined by Fukuyama “simply as a rule of law that recognizes certain individual rights or freedoms from government control.”<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the greater part of Fukuyama’s deliberations is devoted to showing how Kojève’s general thesis has in essence been corroborated by events on the world stage in the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> “Kojève identified an important truth,” Fukuyama observes, “when he asserted that postwar America or the members of the European Community constituted the embodiment of Hegel’s state of univer-

1. Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, collected by Raymond Queneau, 2nd edition (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), 437. I would like to thank Antonio Cua and Thomas Sheehy for their criticisms of an earlier version of this paper.

2. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Avon Books, 1992), 42f., 289, 302f., 314f., 324f., 328, 338f.

3. Ibid., 206, 288, 291, 338.

sal recognition," a state synonymous with the end of history as we know it.<sup>4</sup> According to the argument appropriated by Fukuyama from Kojève, modern liberal democracies present the best possible solution to the human dilemma because they best satisfy the preeminently human need for respect. To the extent that they satisfy this need, liberal democracies mark the end to the human struggle for recognition, a struggle that is the very matter and form of history.<sup>5</sup>

"Universal recognition" in modern liberal democracies obviously does not mean—and neither Kojève nor Fukuyama understands it to mean—that all social inequities have been eliminated. Nature and culture see to it that gifts and talents, training and expertise remain unequally—indeed, by some lights, quite unfairly—distributed. The division of labor inevitably leads to class and economic disparities.<sup>6</sup> Fukuyama himself observes that, rather than universal recognition, an "ultimately irrational" recognition within a particular group "growing out of pre-liberal traditions" often provides a necessary foundation for the stability of liberal democracies.<sup>7</sup>

In liberal democracies such natural, cultural, and economic inequalities exist side by side with a constitutional ratification of the universal recognition that is the hallmark of those democracies and the centerpiece of the "end of history" (or "post-historical") thesis. With that constitutional ratification comes an establishment of political structures designed to reflect a commitment to the recognition of every citizen governed by those structures. Not incidentally, "universal recognition," as it is understood by Kojève and Fukuyama in regard to liberal democracies, primarily signifies a form of equality which ultimately is based upon the alleged moral equality of all human beings.

Because people recognize each other as, by nature, rational and free and thereby worthy persons, they relate to one another politically as citizens with the same fundamental responsibilities and the same fundamental claims on the protection of the law.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, they strive for a further ordering of their society in which the only remaining barriers

4. Ibid., 203. Fukuyama suggests that the liberal democracy is "the most just regime," constituting "the best possible solution to the human problem" (*The End of History*, 337f.); see also Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism and "The Politics of Recognition,"* ed. Amy Gutman, Steven C. Rockefeller, Michael Walzer, and Susan Wolf (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992), 25–73.

5. See Victor Gourevitch, "The End of History?" *Interpretation* 21, no. 2 (Winter 1993–94): 215.

6. *The End of History*, 291: "Middle-class societies will remain highly inegalitarian in certain respects, but the sources of inequality will increasingly be attributable to the natural inequality of talents, the economically necessary division of labor, and to culture."

7. Ibid., 326f., 334f.

8. G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke*, XII, 524.

to social equality are the nature of things (i.e., matters of an inalterable sort) and not people's caprice and prejudice.<sup>9</sup> If one assumes with Kojève that the struggle for recognition of this sort has been the engine of history, then history in an important, political sense of the term does, indeed, come to a close with the attainment of universal recognition.

Fukuyama insists, to be sure, on distinguishing two broadly conceived traditions of liberalism, each with its own understanding of the principle of equality. (The distinction is somewhat wooden but for that very reason also useful.) For Hobbes and Locke equality means one thing, for Kant and Hegel something else. Hobbes roots equality in a mutual fear based upon a mutual capacity to kill one another, while Locke roots it in the shared desire for happiness, a principal component of which is the acquisition of property. So construed, the principle of equal recognition amounts to a means of survival and/or of unrestrained accumulation. By contrast, the liberal tradition of Kant and Hegel takes its bearings from the originally Judaeo-Christian view of equality, namely, equality as creatures, the view that God recognizes all human beings as equals, each with the capacity either to accept or to reject the divine call to the demands of moral goodness.<sup>10</sup> On this view, the principle of equal recognition is no mere means, but far more an absolute value.

The difference between the two liberal traditions is summed up by Fukuyama as follows: "If Hobbesian or Lockean liberalism can be interpreted as the pursuit of rational self-interest, Hegelian 'liberalism' can be seen as the pursuit of rational recognition, that is, recognition on a universal basis in which the dignity of each person as a free and autonomous human being is recognized by all."<sup>11</sup> According to the Hegelian version of liberalism, the primary sense of equality consists not so much in a capacity of human beings to kill one another, or to pursue an individual conception of happiness, as in the capacity of each person to determine and to maintain himself or herself. The liberal state is superior to other forms of government precisely because it is founded on a recognition of this basic human dignity.

The Hegelian vision of liberalism is, Fukuyama argues further, not only the nobler but also the more accurate and telling vision of the course of world history over the last two centuries. The language used by people in contemporary America to describe their society and form of government, Fukuyama contends, is "more Hegelian than Lockean."<sup>12</sup> For

9. *The End of History*, 291; see, too, Ronald Dworkin, *A Matter of Principle* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985), 187, 192f., 196, 207f.

10. Dworkin, *A Matter of Principle*, 196, 199.

11. *Ibid.*, 200.

12. *Ibid.*, 203.

all their debt to Locke, the authors of the Federalist Papers themselves, Fukuyama observes, appreciated the intrinsic importance of the desire for recognition, something that is today taken for granted in democratic countries and inscribed in their constitutions. Indeed, while Hegel, in contrast to Hobbes and Locke, may be credited with having clearly stated this view, the American founding fathers deserve accolades for having successfully steered “the desire for recognition in a positive or at least harmless direction” within the democratic political process.<sup>13</sup>

Despite his enthusiasm for the power of the principle of recognition over the last two centuries, Fukuyama concludes with an exploration of three tensions within liberal democracies that threaten the survival of these democracies.<sup>14</sup> There is, first of all, the patent presence of wide economic disparities (even life-threatening conditions for some parts of society), existing side by side with the so-called political equality of the liberal state. Secondly, there is the equally obvious and equally explosive fact that some people desire to be recognized not as equal, but as superior to others. Finally, some members of the liberal state have a stronger sense of recognition and identification among themselves (for example, through religious, cultural, ethnic, and/or nationalistic bonds) than they have with members of the liberal state as a whole.

The identification of these tensions, like the “end of history” thesis itself, is based upon a conception of human nature that Fukuyama largely takes over from Kojève. Kojève’s thesis that the victory of the principle of recognition coincides with the end of history rests, it bears recalling, on the claim that the desire for recognition is not only the human being’s most important, but also the human being’s most distinctive, desire. In contrast to the other basic need, namely, the need shared with animals for self-preservation, the desire for recognition is a distinctively human desire, distinguishing the human being as such.<sup>15</sup> But does the reciprocal recognition of the sort practiced in a liberal democracy in fact satisfy the need for recognition? Is it not more likely that some people will only be genuinely satisfied by the realization of economic equality or with the establishment of their political and/or economic superiority?

13. Ibid., 186ff., 199f., 203.

14. Fukuyama refers both to “a continuing tension between the twin principles of liberty and equality” (*The End of History*, 292), and to rational liberalism existing “in some tension” with a pre-existing culture (327).

15. Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, 13ff.; Fukuyama, *The End of History*, 146f. It is by no means clear to me to what extent and/or in what sense the desire for recognition is not, in fact, present in some animals, though I presume that the difference in degree among humans is sufficient to make Hegel’s and Kojève’s point. However, the reduction of courage to the fulfillment of the need for recognition seems to be a perversion of certain traditional senses of this virtue.



Removing those conditions in the economy which systematically hold back certain groups in society is, for the most part, considered a staple of a fair and secure domestic policy in liberal democracies. (John Rawls's theory of justice as fairness, for example, is an attempt to provide principles that reflect this consideration and the moral intuitions on which it is based.) For this reason Fukuyama thinks that the disparity between political equality and economic inequality is far less ominous than the need of specific individuals and groups for recognition that is different from or even superior to the sort of equal recognition guaranteed by a liberal democracy. In connection with this threat Fukuyama points to the many possibilities that liberal democratic societies afford their members—for example, in business, science, politics, sport, and art—"to be recognized as better than others."<sup>16</sup> Yet, despite these outlets, the possibility of political relationships falling back into a struggle for political domination can by no means be dismissed.

By raising these questions about the prospects of liberal democracies in view of the tensions mentioned, Fukuyama demonstrates his agreement with a significant part of Strauss's criticism of Kojève. In all likelihood there will be no "last human beings," no return to the animal world, because the struggle for recognition of one sort or another will make itself felt unmistakably even in the liberal epoch of so-called political equality. Yet Fukuyama's warnings about precipitously accepting Kojève's sanguine vision of a liberal and democratic, post-historical world are grounded in the same conception of human nature underlying that vision itself.

The following reflections aim at complementing Fukuyama's investigations by way of criticizing them. The criticism is, however, not based upon the familiar reproaches that he merely dresses up Kojève's fundamental misunderstanding—or, put more kindly, his free reading—of Hegel's political philosophy in new garb,<sup>17</sup> or that Fukuyama's reading of contemporary events is a gross oversimplification.<sup>18</sup> There is much to be said for both of these objections. For example, in Hegel's analysis of the

16. *The End of History*, 315; Fukuyama continues: "Indeed, democracy's long-run health and stability can be seen to rest on the quality and number of outlets for *megalothymia* that are available to its citizens." See also *ibid.*, 304.

17. See, for example, Philip T. Grier, "The End of History and the Return of History," *Owl of Minerva* 21, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 131–44. On the point that Kojève never construed his interpretation of Hegel as an exegesis of the *mens auctoris*, see Michael Roth, "A Problem of Recognition: Alexandre Kojève and the End of History," *History and Theory* 24, no. 3 (1985): 293–306.

18. Endre Kiss, "Gorbatschow als legitimer oder illegitimer Vollender Hegels (Das Ende der Geschichte als eine Theorie der Gegenwart)," *Studien zur Problematik des Endes der Geschichte* (Budapest, 1992), 9, 13, 16.

master-slave dialectic he attaches major significance to the slave's greater awareness of death, an awareness that more than compensates for what might otherwise appear to be the slave's lesser need for recognition. Yet this central insight is strangely missing from Fukuyama's interpretation of Hegel, a neglect that weakens not only the presentation but the very substance and force of his argument regarding the reasons for the historical ascendancy of liberal democracies. Nor can there be any doubt that Fukuyama's attempt to write a "philosophical world history" of the past century or more is guilty of overgeneralizations (for example, labeling the United States, Romania, Turkey, and Lebanon in 1990 all "liberal democracies") and of many a philosopher's penchant for overlooking the power of contingencies (such as Chernobyl or Gorbachev's persona). Nor, finally, given capitalism's track record, its relatively brief appearance on the world stage as a dominant economic form, and its own technological and political dynamics, is there any reason to share Fukuyama's sanguinity about the capacity of contemporary political economies to keep economic disparities within "acceptable" social limitations? More importantly, what about their capacity to cope with natural disasters (for example, the ravages of droughts, hurricanes, tsunamis) and to ward off depression, environmental catastrophes, a disastrous lack of opportunity and employment, egregious global imbalances of production and consumption, and a general despair on the part of the citizenry regarding the economic and social prospects of their families?

Nevertheless, there is every danger that, by concentrating too much on these negatives, critics may fail to appreciate Kojève's and Fukuyama's genuine contributions. Included among those contributions is the outline for a powerful hypothesis regarding the causes of major political events in general and during the second half of the twentieth century in particular. Perhaps even more importantly, the argument is based upon a conviction that an adequate interpretation of political events depends upon a suitable understanding of human nature.

It is precisely this last regard—the strength not the weakness of the Kojève-Fukuyama reflections—at which the following critical remarks are directed. My criticism is directed at the understanding of human nature that underlies Fukuyama's interpretation of the contemporary state of liberal democracies. Fukuyama's argument involves a conception of human nature that in one vital respect stands in stark contrast to the classical (or "Platonic") view of human nature, a view which he otherwise endeavors to appropriate.<sup>19</sup> In the evaluation of the events of world

19. *The End of History*, 337.

history, Fukuyama takes into serious consideration only two of those three parts of the human soul—*thymos* and *epithymetikon*—elaborated by Plato in the fourth book of the *Republic* (439d, 440e). Instead of discussing the meaning of wisdom—*sophia*—as the key to the perfection of the human soul's capacities, Fukuyama presents the third part of the soul—*logiston*—in such a way that its sole task, the task of reason, consists in securing satisfaction of both those needs shared with animals and the human desire for recognition. In this respect, Fukuyama's analysis and his liberalism remain quintessentially "modern."

Fukuyama's neglect of the traditional role assigned to reason by classical political philosophy is far from idiosyncratic. That neglect is symptomatic of an entire culture of political thinking within contemporary liberal democracies. The consequences of such neglect for this political culture are neither merely academic nor benign. Instead, they present contemporary liberal democracies with a genuine crisis. The crisis at issue can, to be sure, take many forms. Nevertheless, at bottom it is the crisis that emerges whenever two parties make claims that are contradictory and yet apparently equally justified. When, for example, some members of disadvantaged groups or minorities—some women in a patriarchal society, some Afro-Americans in the United States, some Quebecois in Canada, some Sinti and Roma in Germany, some Moslems in France, and so forth—demand from society what many regard as special treatment, they often justify that claim on the basis of a right to equality, the fundamental principle of liberalism.<sup>20</sup> When adversaries declare these demands illegal, they also appeal to the principle of equal recognition before the law. As a result, within liberal democracies two contrasting types of politics typically emerge, "the politics of difference" and "the politics of equal dignity," as Charles Taylor characterizes them, each of which corresponds to a competing conception of liberalism.<sup>21</sup>

In what follows, the crisis of recognition is presented as an antinomy, although its ultimate import is to point to alternatives not only within liberalism but also to liberalism itself. The antinomy is designed to bring to a head the tensions within liberal democracies mentioned by Fukuyama and to do so in a way that makes patent the necessary but neglected role that classical political philosophy assigns to wisdom. Accordingly, in the course of pursuing this objective it will also be evident that the antinomy revives in a certain sense *la querelle des anciens et des modernes* on the foundations of an adequate political philosophy.

20. Dworkin, *A Matter of Principle*, 190.

21. Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," 37–44, 60.

## The Crisis of Recognition as an Antinomy

The antinomy of recognition consists of an “idealistic technical” thesis and a “naturalistic” antithesis. The thesis involves the assumption that the appropriate sort of political recognition does not come naturally, but must be fashioned or constructed on the basis of certain ideals. The antithesis assumes that the only legitimate sort of political recognition is that grounded in human nature and its natural affiliations. In the course of the presentation of the antinomy the rationale behind these labels will hopefully become clearer. Both thesis and antithesis proceed from the same principle that every human being has an identity and a dignity which entail specific obligations and responsibilities and secure certain rights.

### THE ANTINOMY OF RECOGNITION

#### *The idealistic-technical thesis*

Because each human being has its own identity and dignity, all human beings ought to be treated in the same way. If a human being or a specific group demands special status in society, that could only take place through neglect, discrimination, and even violation of the identity and dignity of others. For this reason, the only sort of identity and dignity that is relevant is the individual's capacity or potential for autonomous or responsible action. This capacity is not immediately overt. Nevertheless, in spite of whatever ostensible and ideological distinctions are dominant in a society, each human being, insofar as he or she is rational and thus can deliberate, has the capacity to make choices. The highest political value consists neither in what a person is or does as a “child of nature,” nor in the degree to which a person's existence and accomplishments contribute to the well-being of the society or the state. The supreme political value lies rather in the autonomy of every human being. The principle of equality

#### *The naturalistic antithesis*

Because each human being has its own identity and dignity, all human beings may not be treated in the same way. If all human beings were treated in the same manner, then the identity and dignity proper to each individual would be disregarded. However, the principle of equality is negated as soon as the identity and dignity of a single human being is not respected. How can it be right to treat people in vastly inequitable circumstances (for example, poor and rich) or of quite different character (for example, the honorable and the dishonorable) as though they were fundamentally the same? On what basis and in what way is it permissible to exclude from the identity and dignity of human beings the natural differences of gender or of origin on a particular part of the globe, with its own ethnic tradition and history? Indeed, when such dissimilarities are not taken into account, one cannot help wondering whether a particular (for example, patriarchal or sectarian) conception of identity and dignity, proper to those

signifies that each human being has its own identity and dignity and for this reason possesses the right to the respect of fellow citizens as well as the duty to respect this dignity in others. Accordingly, the principle of equality can only be in force when (or to the extent that) there is universal, fully reciprocal recognition. There may not be any legally privileged people or groups and, by the same token, no conception of the so-called "good life" may be privileged. Under this interpretation of the principle of equality, it would be unjust to take into consideration any properties and capabilities or accomplishments other than a person's inherent autonomy.

with the most power in the society, has not been forcibly generalized. In other words, how can one be sure that what a specific part of society allegedly regards as an expression of universal recognition is not in fact merely the cunning, pragmatic imposition of particular, cultural prejudices? This criticism of the idealistic-technical thesis mirrors the problematic character of the so-called "golden rule": "Love your neighbor as yourself!" The problem is, it can be quite unjust and even injurious to a person's neighbor if that person behaves toward that neighbor in precisely the way that person would like to have others behave toward him or her. Is there any reason to think that one person's conception of what it means to be loved in a particular case corresponds to someone else's conception?

The arguments of both thesis and antithesis are based upon genuine insights. On the one hand, in the practical execution of the idealistic-technical thesis there is a genuine danger of repressive hegemony, precisely because a conception of identity and dignity in terms of autonomy alone is purely formal or, better, underdetermined and, hence, unworkable without the addition of other principles that are in fact based upon a conception of human nature. It would be naive to think that such principles would not reflect and cement those very relationships of power and influence on the basis of which the society presently functions. On the other hand, the defenders of the idealistic-technical thesis regard the practical implications of the naturalistic antithesis as nothing less than a recipe for regressing into the old power politics that so frequently seemed to define feudal governmental and economic relations. Hence, the appropriateness of the word *regress* from the perspective of those who endorse the idealistic-technical thesis. For them political society is primarily something to be constructed and its construction on the basis of a theory of reciprocal recognition is the severe and violent accomplishment of modernity.

Despite these weighty considerations on both sides, the antinomy of recognition itself is obviously an artifice, plainly due to diverse interpretations of the principle of equality, that "every human being has its own

identity and dignity.” Thus, on the one hand, the thesis is persuasive as long as emphasis is put on the word *every* and as long as it is possible to determine the identity and dignity that “every” human being has coming to them. For example, the libertarians, who by some accounts might be considered the purest liberals, ascribe to each human being an autonomy, the right to make free choices, quite apart from what is chosen. On the other hand, the antithesis is convincing if the term *own* is singled out for emphasis. Instead of being able to consist in some universally shared property such as autonomy, each human being has his or her “own” identity and dignity, rooted in natural and cultural determinations of what the human being is and chooses.<sup>22</sup>

From a logical point of view, the antinomy is thus resolvable. No contradiction ensues as long as the two conflicting interpretations of the principle of equality are distinguished. Yet there remains a real problem underlying these two different ways of construing the principle of equality. That problem concerns the connection or integration of the contrasting understandings of equality. For the necessity of some such integration is patent. On the one hand, the understanding of equality to which the thesis appeals is far too formal, presenting no content for ethical decision making in the domain of politics and public policy. When an actual decision of this sort is made, the content of the choice is paramount. That is to say, who or what is being recognized and not merely that or how the recognition takes place must be the focus of attention. In political terms, concern must be for what is being legislated and not merely for the fact or manner of the legislating. On the other hand, by providing no basis for recognition of the human being as a human being (rather than merely as a male, a Swede, or a Lutheran, and so on), the antithesis seems to lack a foundation for a genuinely moral, political common life.

The reciprocal recognition touted in the idealistic-technical thesis can be realized only by appealing to the sort of good life that befits a human being as such. In order to judge whether, as the antithesis asserts, a particular (non-universal) but natural conception of identity and dignity on the part of individuals or groups deserves the recognition claimed for it, members of society have no recourse but to some account of the identity of the human being as such. In short, each interpretation of the principle of equality is incomplete. In order to be complete and rendered sufficiently workable each of these interpretations requires a de-

22. The difficulty may be regarded as the product of apparently competing claims of autonomy and identity. The problem arises if we construe autonomy in the absence of identity or if we construe identity as somehow fixed and essentially grounded in ways that override rather than complement autonomy.

termination of the good life, the life that is proper to the human being as such.<sup>23</sup> The crisis of recognition can only be resolved through a determination of the content, not of a pure or particular will, but of a good will. What is required, in other words, is nothing less than the accomplishment of the task set by classical ethical and political philosophy, an accomplishment impossible without wisdom, the virtue corresponding to that part of the human soul that thinks and reasons. That this requirement must be met confirms at the same time the unsuitability of the approach of those modern political thinkers who—much like Fukuyama—construct the possibility of the modern state solely or chiefly on the basis of principles of recognition and equality. The crisis of recognition consists in opposed claims either between the part of the soul seeking satisfaction of our animal needs and the recognition-seeking part, or between demands for recognition as an equal and as a superior to others. The crisis expressed in the antinomy is not resolvable as long as there is no third part of the soul, occupying a position not simply next to the other parts, but, as it were, over them, with the responsibility of ordering them.

## The Antinomy of Recognition and the End of History

In his articulation of how liberalism might be construed as the “end of history,” Fukuyama remains within the all too confining framework of the antinomy of recognition sketched in the preceding section. The allegedly most dangerous tension, that between the demand for universal, reciprocal recognition (*isothymia*) and the desire to be recognized as “superior to other people” (*megalothenymia*, “the desire for glory”), presents one particular version of the antinomy.<sup>24</sup> In this version *isothymia* is a moral-psychological expression of the thesis; *megalothenymia* a corresponding expression of the antithesis. The tension between political and economic equality represents another form of the same antinomy.

The triumph of liberalism is explained by Fukuyama as a combination of two things. Liberalism’s success is due, on the one hand, to “the

23. This claim, as it stands, is in need of considerable qualification since, as Tim Brownlee rightly cautions, its concern with establishing the “good life” and orienting politics accordingly could be seen as another form of hegemony. We need some more substantive criterion of what counts as good than the modern equation of good with satisfaction of desire, but this criterion must be sufficiently flexible to secure a diverse range of opportunities within which individuals can pursue what they respectively take to be their own respective goods. Alternatively, tolerance of different conceptions of the good life must be included as a good in the sort of substantive political criterion of the good life called for here.

24. *The End of History*, 182f.; see also 186: “In one society after another, Hobbes’s deal has been offered to the old class of aristocrats: namely, that they trade in their thymotic pride for the prospect of a peaceful life of unlimited material acquisition.”



economization of life," the "blossoming of the desiring part of the soul" (that part seeking satisfaction of animal needs), and, on the other, to the replacement of the *megalothenia* of the nobility with "an all-pervasive *isothymia*, that is, the desire to be recognized as the equal of other people."<sup>25</sup> The tensions that continue to be a danger to liberal democracies stem from the conflicts between the desirous and the *thymotic* parts of the soul or between a measured and excessive expression of the *thymotic* part of the soul. What is clearly missing in this analysis is the classical role of the third part of the soul and, even more importantly, the role of the virtue corresponding to it: wisdom.<sup>26</sup>

At the beginning of the fourth part of *The End of History and the Last Man* the poles of the antinomy of recognition surface unmistakably in regard to the third tension mentioned by Fukuyama. He attempts to explain why it is often so difficult for nations that endorse democratic principles to make the practical transition to democracy. For the most part, the answer lies for him in the distinction between state and society. "The success and stability of liberal democracy . . . never depends simply on the mechanical application of a certain set of universal principles and laws, but requires a degree of conformity between peoples and states."<sup>27</sup> While the founding of a liberal state is supposed to be a "rational act," the existence of a people with its common notions of good and evil, of the holy and profane, and so on, precedes the state; while the politics is "the sphere of self-conscious choice about the proper mode of governance," the rules of culture and society are "seldom explicit or self-consciously recognized even by those who participate in them."<sup>28</sup> Fukuyama identifies the following cultural factors as the most significant sources of resistance to the march of liberalism: nationalism, religion, enormous social inequality (as, for example, when there is no thriving middle class, the *sine qua non* of a healthy civil society), and lack of experience or capacity of self-governance and self-confirmation on local levels.

25. *Ibid.*, 190; see Gourevitch, "The End of History?" 216, 228 n. 5, for a good account of the sources of Fukuyama's reading of Plato's political psychology.

26. Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny*, revised and enlarged (London: Macmillan, 1963), 225: "Modern man, dissatisfied with utopias and scorning them, has tried to find a guarantee for the actualization of the best social order. In order to succeed, or rather in order to be able to believe that he could succeed, he had to lower the goal of man. One form in which this was done was to replace moral virtue by universal recognition, or to replace happiness by the satisfaction deriving from universal recognition." As this text might suggest, Fukuyama is doubtless influenced by Strauss's analysis. Yet when Fukuyama discusses reason as the third part of the soul and even when he occasionally mentions wisdom, he subordinates its role to that of serving the other two parts (in Plato's tripartite theory of the soul); see *The End of History*, 176f., 204f., 220; a similar criticism has been advanced by Gourevitch in his article "The End of History?" 221, 224.

27. *The End of History*, 213.

28. *Ibid.*, 212f.



This tension between the principles of liberal democracy and the elements of a culture presents yet another version of the antinomy of recognition. The idealistic-technical thesis revolves around the alleged necessity of reciprocal recognition which is embodied in the liberal state alone. Such a state is created and, indeed, “at a certain point, it must arise out of a deliberate political decision to establish democracy.”<sup>29</sup> By contrast, many of the different features and capabilities of human beings underlying the argument for the naturalistic antithesis are not consciously chosen and created, but rather are rooted in the culture and the society—and indeed, if not prior to, then at least in some important sense independent of the grounding of, the state.

Fukuyama is not completely consistent in his account of this third tension within liberal democracies. Though at one point he insists that the realm of politics is “autonomous” in relation to culture, at another point he concedes “that the dividing line between culture and politics, between peoples and states, is not all that clear.”<sup>30</sup> However, it is to Fukuyama’s credit that he falls into this inconsistency, for it further testifies to the inadequacy of the conception of human nature with which he is working. If, for example, the liberal democratic form of governance in the United States did in fact fulfill the dreams of its people at any point in the last two hundred years, then the success is based not upon the expression of some abstract or even concrete *volonté générale*, bent only on satisfying animal desires and a wish to be recognized, but rather on the wise direction of a predominantly European, Protestant community within the framework of a capitalist economic system—a direction and guidance, I might add, that has been extremely fortuitous, in several senses of the term.<sup>31</sup> In other words, if liberal democracies manage to contribute to bringing about the good life of a political society, the measure of that contribution can be traced to the extent to which liberal democracies make it possible for reason, spirit, and desire to work effectively together in the soul of each individual and, thereby, in the society. In other words, the measure of success of liberal democracies lies in their capacity to promote the right, that is to say, the “just” harmony of moderation, courage, and wisdom in its people.<sup>32</sup>

29. *Ibid.*, 220.

30. *Ibid.*, 220–31.

31. See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1.10, 1.13 (1100b23–30, 1102a17–24).

32. Walter Bröcker, *Platos Gespräche*, 2nd printing (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1967), 268.

## Chapter 14

# THE RELIGION OF ART

*Je poetischer, je wahrer*—Novalis<sup>1</sup>

Whatever one might think of Feyerabend's philosophy of science, there is certainly much to be said for his claim that science today has in large measure finally fulfilled its Enlightenment mission and replaced religion as the accepted authority, source, and guardian of the truth. The rites of scientific method yield reliable, visible wonders even as they define new mysteries of force fields, neutrinos, and quarks. Legal, political, and economic decisions are considered recklessly irresponsible, indeed punitively liable, if they are not made under suitable consultation, not with clergymen, but with scientists. Research institutes are the bastions of a twentieth-century monasticism; like the great cathedrals that once dwarfed European cities, a testimony to the collective religious will and sacrifice of generations, linear accelerators cut through large swaths of the contemporary landscape (Stanford's two-mile accelerator in Palo Alto is a good example), inspiring another sort of social pride, piety, and fear.

Philosophers have, of course, repeatedly reminded us of the limits of science, and this reminder is a point of convergence even among those with quite different conceptions of science. Aristotle, for example, argues persuasively that, though the task of science consists in syllogistic demonstration of properties, not everything is demonstrable. Moreover, while declaring primary, individual substances to be substances in the highest degree, underlying all species and genera, Aristotle points out that there can be no science of the individual.<sup>2</sup> Kant developed a rather different theory of science, based on the premise that a part of nature can become a subject of science only to the extent that mathematics

1. Novalis, *Werke und Briefe*, ed. with an afterword by Alfred Kellertat (Stuttgart/Hamburg: Deutscher Bücherbund, 1962), 410.

2. *Posterior Analytics I*, chap. 3 (73a16–20); *Categories*, chap. 5 (2b15–16); *Metaphysics* bk. E, chap. 2 (1026b25–26).

is applicable to it.<sup>3</sup> That Kant recognized the possibility of a world not confined to the parameters of natural science is well known. Yet even among natural phenomena Kant saw limitations for science. The inapplicability of mathematics to the phenomena of the inner sense—feelings, perceptions, dreams—makes it impossible, Kant thought, for empirical psychology ever to be a legitimate natural science.

Study of Aristotle and Kant is, of course, hardly required to recognize that science cannot replace religion or, at least, that science has certain limitations. Science is revered in the public domain, in the courts, and in boardrooms, indeed wherever a premium is put on explaining how things in general come about. Yet we do not, and know we cannot, look to science to explain the entire dense and terminal phenomena of an individual human life. The uniqueness and contingency of events and emotions, the personal choices, fates, and responsibilities of individuals, relationships, families, and communities defy the logic of measurement and experiment. Human life is a spring of desire and hope, disappointment and despair, rushing in a current of willed and unwilled habits, to a quite definite, private end. Religion traditionally articulates a meaning for this personal odyssey, thus accomplishing what science, construed as the study of nature in its universal or mathematical features, cannot. The appreciation of that meaning accordingly demands the assent to something supernatural, something otherworldly. At the same time that meaning remains in force within historically and geographically defined traditions, by concretely defining rites of passage in terms of bonds sustaining the individual in a particular community.

Nevertheless, the Enlightenment's discrediting of religion did create a personal vacuum for many, a vacuum filled not by religious revival but by the arts. Science may indeed have usurped the role of religion in the public domain, but art has become the private tabernacle to which even religious souls find themselves retreating to celebrate and to mourn, to contemplate and to fantasize the mysteries of individual and social fates. Wackenroder's remark, "I compare the enjoyment of the nobler works of art to prayer," was prophetic.<sup>4</sup> We confess our sins and are purged—in the theater. High mass is sung to perfection—in the concert hall. Solemn altarpieces of Grünewald and Van Eyck beckon us to piety—in museums.

That art acquires its own religious significance, that a religion of art is

3. *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaften*, Preface in *Kants gesammelte Schriften*, V, 470.

4. Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder and Ludwig Teick, *Herzensergießungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders* (1797) (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1979), 72: "Ich vergleiche den Genuß der edleren Kunstwerke dem *Gebet*."

celebrated, not so much as part of, but rather in contrast to traditional religion, indeed, as an *Ersatz* of religion, is itself part of a historical development that proceeded hand in hand with the so-called *Verbürgerlichung* of the arts. This term *Verbürgerlichung* is not easy to translate, but it refers broadly to the gradual detachment of the arts from the claims of the nobility and the church, as part of the historical emergence of the social and political autonomy of the middle class, the *Bürger*, the bourgeoisie. This process should not, however, be interpreted in crude Marxist fashion, as though artists simply transferred allegiance (along with a shift in source of income) from *l'ancien régime* to the *tiers état*. To be sure, often enough the new forms and subjects of art are deliberate reflections of bourgeois values. The realism of Dutch painting, for example, is due not only to the abolition of religious art by the Reformed Church of Holland but also to the fact that artists had now to work not for patrons, but for a thoroughly middle-class market. Lessing's *Miß Sara Sampson* (1754) is the first German *bürgerliches Trauerspiel*; Diderot's *Fils naturel* and *Père de famille* (1757) are bourgeois tragedies. Even Winckelmann, no friend of bourgeois tastes, who urged contemporary painters, sculptors, and architects to take neither Dutch nor baroque masters but the idealized "noble simplicity" of the ancients as their model, recognized that this artistic perfection required the public spirit and political freedom enjoyed by the Athenians.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, despite these examples, the *Verbürgerlichung* of the arts signifies not so much the hold of a newly autonomous bourgeoisie over the arts as the increasing autonomy of the arts and artists themselves—indeed, if anything, their hold over the bourgeoisie. That autonomy is relative, to be sure, as any present-day commercial artist will testify. Yet in a culture determined by the mechanism of the market, painters and sculptors, musicians and actors increasingly come to think of themselves as professionals and even professional high priests: opera companies, art institutes, and societies for the performing arts are formed like so many latter-day religious orders; with all the enthusiasm once reserved for great cathedrals, architects compete to design museums, temples of civic pride. The different autonomy of artworks of earlier ages and different cultures as well as the truths they have to reveal, meanwhile, are rediscovered. Artworks, old and new, Romanesque churches and royal galleries become national treasures, important sources of financial equity and income through tourism. Modern technology's role in this

5. Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* (1756) (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1982); see Armand Nivelle, *Kunst- und Dichtungstheorien zwischen Aufklärung und Klassik*, 2nd ed., revised and expanded (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1971), 67f.

development grows in tandem with the increasing autonomy of art, a curious (though, thanks to Heidegger, not wholly unexpected) reappropriation of the original Greek sense of "*technē*." In our century the lure of the original is offset—pardon the pun—and yet, in a certain respect, even enhanced by the commonplace of copies, records, and slides. The sounds of a Wagner opera in Bayreuth are heard in a Texas country kitchen; in waiting rooms and offices a different reproduction of Franz Marc or Rubens announces a different week or month.

In the increasing autonomy enjoyed by the arts, the artist is able to see his or her activity as something having its own integrity, and the artwork is recognized as having its own essence and existence. Perhaps this historical development helps explain the misgivings felt toward traditional theories of art that construe art as akin to a shadow world, a mere imitation of something substantial. Artworks continue to be artworks, it is argued, even if no one in fact comes forth to appreciate their excellence. A work of art is, in Paul Weiss's apt formulation of this position, "a self-sufficient, substantial reality, creatively produced, and possessing its own rationale."<sup>6</sup> The experience of art, moreover, is not considered something incidental ("accidental" in the Scholastic sense) and certainly not something on the periphery of contemporary life. Art is no longer just our Sabbath, as nineteenth-century critics observed. The experience of the arts has become no less profoundly routine (with all the paradox of a routine profundity) than monks chanting the Divine Office.

Art thus comes into its own as a world of its own, with a promise, at least, beyond the normal headaches and worries, the profit motive and power struggles, that otherwise dominate the everyday world. The artworld is another world, an inverted world, if you will. But just because it is inverted, the world of art often becomes our conscience, a world in which truth can break down prejudice and unmask pretenses that cloud what is clear in obscurity or substitute cheap clarity for genuine ambiguity.

The artworld's self-conscious otherworldliness, even as it populates the world it confronts, explains its obsession with originality. The naturalistic works of Flaubert or Zola were no less controversially novel parables than *Paradise Lost* or, for that matter, Kafka's fragments. At the outset of the twentieth century, artworks were cheekily canonized *Jugendstil* and *l'art nouveau*. In the present day, the romantic cult of the genius, the artistic evangelist inspired (like the original evangelists) in a way no rules can capture, survives in the myth of the misunderstood artist, the aesthete as martyr.

The thesis that the arts develop as a relatively autonomous institution

6. Paul Weiss, *Nine Basic Arts* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961), 63; see also *The World of Art* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961), 79.

in the contemporary world, usurping in a certain measure the traditional role of religion and religious experience for the individual and the community, is neither novel nor uncontroversial. The refinement of the thesis—which can be traced to the German critic Friederich Theodor Vischer, later to Nietzsche, and most recently to Thomas Nipperdey—demands investigations proper to the history and sociology of the arts.<sup>7</sup> However, art's way of giving witness to an *otherworldliness within the world* and the other quasi-religious trappings of its contemporary status also sharpen certain traditional and contemporary philosophical questions about the nature of art, about some paradigmatic ways we wield the term “art,” and about at least some of the kinds of things we call “art.” Some philosophers may attempt to differentiate strictly descriptive or classificatory from evaluative uses of the term and there are, no doubt, contexts and theories in which that is meaningful. Yet there is also a common use of the term that defies this sort of differentiation. I am thinking of cases where we typically call something “art” in order to single it out precisely as a bearer of value. In such cases, perhaps because we are drawing on the traditional association with so-called “fine art,” the principle of classification is a principle of evaluation. In the present paper, with its focus on the religion of art, I am concerned with art and the arts precisely in this honorific sense, i.e., in the sense that calling something art or classifying something as one of “the arts” is willy-nilly to recommend it, to value it.

If a philosophy of art is to have any hope of elaborating what art is and what renders a work a work of art in the present day, it must take it upon itself to try to explain why art is so valued, why it enjoys such widespread respect, a respect that verges on a kind of religious piety. On the last few pages I have been laying some of the foundation for this claim by calling attention to the emergence of what I am calling “the religion of art.”<sup>8</sup> My contention is that we are, with good reason, probably not going to be satisfied with any philosophical theory of art that does not provide an adequate account of the meaning of the religion of art and, not least, its otherworldliness, sketched above. Contemporary accounts of art do focus on something akin to the otherworldliness of art and they do so in an attempt to determine what paradigmatically distinguish-

7. See the excellent article by Thomas Nipperdey, “Wie die Kunst autonom wurde: das Bürgertum und die unbürgerliche Moderne, Erinnerung an das 19. Jahrhundert,” in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 8, 1987, 181.

8. The fact that art in various forms has replaced religion in many respects for much of contemporary society obviously does not mean that the significance of religion has been or can be usurped. For a thoroughgoing treatment of this set of issues, it would be necessary to give a more expansive and detailed differentiation of art and religion, historically and systematically.

es artworks from mere artifacts or at least from other things produced or gathered by human hands. In the next part of this paper I consider some of these accounts and, on the basis of the phenomenon of the religion of art, register their achievements and certain difficulties besetting them. With this critique of contemporary theories in hand, I turn to a view of art, common to German idealists and romantics, that is remarkable, not only for its prescience with regard to the achievements of much contemporary theory, but also for its capacity to explain why it is possible to come to regard and experience art as embodying religion.<sup>9</sup>

The problem of explaining the nature of art and, in particular, its apparent discontinuity with reality, its otherworldliness, has dominated much contemporary philosophy of art. This very discontinuity seems to undermine traditional mimetic as well as deliberately countermimetic theories of art. A robust theory of art must be able to take into account the baroque as well as the classical, suprematism as well as naturalism, and, following Weiss, at least nine different, basic arts. There seems to be no way to identify a particular sort of content, realistic or idealized, that, when found in a particular object, guarantees that it is a work of art. Contemporary art or at least the contemporary artwork has, moreover, exacerbated the problem of a philosophy of art. Picasso's collages, Duchamp's ready-mades, and pop art, for those who take it seriously, make a farce of traditional art and art theories, by giving us artworks indiscernible from objects found on grocery shelves or in lavatories.

The response of several contemporary philosophers of art has been to abdicate the question of the identity of an artwork to the artworld.<sup>10</sup> With the help of Wittgenstein's analysis of "games," Morris Weitz persuaded many of his peers that subconcepts of art, such as tragedy, the novel, the opera, and even the concept of art itself are open concepts, specifying neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for something to be an instance of that concept. Weitz insists that there is no true theory of art because there cannot be one. "Such a theory," Weitz reasons, "forecloses on the concept of art."<sup>11</sup> Given the very way the concept of

9. This proposal has ramifications for other long-standing problems in the philosophy of art, not least the question of the relation of the identity of art, so construed, to the identity of philosophy itself. Also, to the extent that the case can be made that art's significance is its proto-religious character, the ancient question presents itself of sorting out and reconciling aesthetic sensibilities, an artistic faith, if you will, with theoretical and practical reasoning.

10. What follows is a cursory review of three *distinct* and leading responses (Weitz, Dickie, Danto) to the question of determining what it means to identify something as an artwork. For all their differences these responses invoke the linguistic practice, the theory, and/or history of a specific artworld.

11. Morris Weitz, *The Opening Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 50f.;

art is wielded, the attempt to identify necessary or sufficient conditions for it is like trying to slam shut a revolving door. A theory of art, moreover, is not only impossible, but unnecessary. If we “look and see,” we find that no set of definitive criteria, the stuff of essentialistic definitions, is required for intelligible discourse about art and arts and, indeed, new art forms.<sup>12</sup>

Weitz has been criticized for confusing classificatory and evaluational notions of art (see our earlier comments in this regard) and, like Goodman, for restricting the properties of artworks to what meets the eye, in other words, for assuming that all aesthetic differences are perceptual differences.<sup>13</sup> His appeal to similarities (none of which need be necessary or sufficient) to determine whether something should be called an “artwork” is contested on the grounds that it invites an infinite regress, failing to explain the original basis of the similarities.<sup>14</sup> There are other properties of an artwork, not sensibly patent and not similar to the properties of other works, namely, the work’s historical and social context.<sup>15</sup> That something is an artwork, it was argued, is determined by these relationships. “To see something as art requires something that the eye cannot decry—an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld.”<sup>16</sup>

This thesis, originally drafted by Arthur Danto, was developed by George Dickie into an “institutional” theory of art. According to the initial version of this theory, there are actually two necessary conditions

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“The Role of Theory in Aesthetics,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 15, no. 1 (1956): 27–35; “Wittgenstein’s Aesthetics,” in *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology*, ed. G. Dickie and R. Sclafani (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1977), 474–83.

12. While continuing to insist that art is an open concept, Weitz later advises that some concepts such as tragedy are, in contrast to a concept like art, “open-textured” concepts, that is to say, allowing for the possibility of the rejection of prevailing criteria.

13. Maurice Mandelbaum, “Family Resemblances and Generalization Concerning the Arts,” in *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology*, 2nd ed., ed. G. Dickie, R. Sclafani, and R. Roblin (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 138–51; George Dickie, *Aesthetics: An Introduction* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Bobbs-Merrill, 1971), 99ff.; *The Art Circle* (New York: Haven, 1984), 110; Arthur Danto, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), 43.

14. Dickie, *The Art Circle*, 33: “The new conception [that of Weitz] requires supplementing; it needs some way of showing how something can be a work of art independently of whether it resembles a prior-established work of art and how such a work of art can block the infinite regress.” Hence, Dickie pleads for countenancing “nonsimilarity art”; see *ibid.*, 34. But see Weitz’s telling responses to Mandelbaum’s and Dickie’s criticisms in *The Opening Mind*, 54–58 and 81–90.

15. Dickie insists that artifactuality is a *necessary* condition, in contrast to Weitz, who construes it only as an “unrejectable” criterion. See Dickie, *Aesthetics: An Introduction*, 98; “The New Institutional Theory of Art,” in *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology* (1989), 197; *The Art Circle*, 6f., 62f.

16. Arthur Danto, “The Artistic Enfranchisement of Real Objects: The Artworld” (1964), in *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology* (1989), 177.



of artworks, artifactuality and institutionality. However, as the theory's name suggests, institutionality was more central. Consider, for example, the following remarks by Dickie: "A year or two ago the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago exhibited some chimpanzee and gorilla paintings. In the case of these paintings we must say that they are not works of art. However, if they had been exhibited a few miles away at the Chicago Art Institute they would have been works of art—the paintings would have been art if the director of the Art Institute had, so to speak, gone out on a limb. It all depends on the institutional setting—the one setting is congenial to conferring the status of art and the other is not."<sup>17</sup> Dickie, who is also known for successfully debunking the idea that there is something like a specifically aesthetic attitude, insisted that a work need not actually be appreciated.<sup>18</sup> An artwork, good or bad, appreciated or not, is an artifact—not necessarily human!—enjoying the status of being a candidate for appreciation, conferred by someone representing the artworld. Indeed, in an attempt to countenance Duchamp's readymades, Dickie originally considered artifactuality itself something that can be conferred.

As Weitz pointed out, this construal renders the condition of artifactuality otiose. In recent years Dickie has revised his theory in favor of the artifactuality condition. In his "new institutional theory of art," not only can artifactuality not be conferred,<sup>19</sup> but the status of being an artwork is not something conferred by an artwork at all. Instead it is something *achieved* by a creative use of a medium, against the background of the artworld. "A work of art is an artifact created to be presented to an art-world public."<sup>20</sup> Just as in the earlier version a work need not actually be appreciated, so in the revised version a work need not actually be presented.<sup>21</sup>

Dickie is undoubtedly correct to think that what makes something an artwork cannot lie simply in some sort of peculiarly aesthetic response.<sup>22</sup> This anti-aesthetic direction does not, however, mean that works of art are conceivable in absence of its devotees, connoisseurs, and publics. Accordingly, Dickie rightly insists that a theory of art—or, *pace* Weitz, even

17. Dickie, *Aesthetics: An Introduction*, 106.

18. He adds that, while someone cannot make a mistake in conferring the status of art, the individual may lose face, if in fact the work remains unappreciated.

19. "Readymades" are correspondingly construed "as the artifacts of artists as the result of a kind of minimal work on the part of those artists." See *The Art Circle*, 11, 44ff.

20. *The Art Circle*, 12, 80.

21. *The Art Circle*, 65f., 71f.

22. The determination of that experience is notoriously difficult and, moreover, according to the intended, original sense of the term, an *aesthetic* experience may be a response to nature as well as to a work of art and, in the latter case, a response to the nature or likeness to nature in the work.

consideration of the conditions for normal use of the term “art”<sup>23</sup>—respect the “thick” network of relations informing the artwork, encompassing both artifactuality (the relation between artist and artwork)<sup>24</sup> and the intention of public presentability (the artist’s intention of making something able to be presented to a public).<sup>25</sup>

However, what Dickie’s institutional theory fails to explain is why an artifact should be considered a candidate for appreciation or, according to his revised theory, why creations of a certain kind are such that they can be presented to a specific public (the artworld). By virtue of what is the status achieved?<sup>26</sup> The notion of achievement seems to entail the possibility of failure, e.g., an artifact that cannot be presented to the artworld. Either this is a possibility and it is incumbent upon Dickie to explain why, or no artifact is unpresentable and the (revised) institutional condition—together with talk of status and achievement—becomes otiose. In Dickie’s defense, one might argue that he is concerned not with an evaluative but with a “more basic, classificatory” theory of art, capable of explaining why even bad works of art are nonetheless entitled to the ascription.<sup>27</sup> Yet this line of defense is inadequate, since even a bad work of art is “an artifact of a kind to be presented to an artworld” and, hence, subject to some sort of canons of presentability. As I argued earlier on the basis of some typical uses of the term “art,” the distinction between classificatory and evaluative theories seems to break down inasmuch as the criterion of classification in certain cases supposes a principle of evaluation. The passive infinitive construction (“to be presented”) built into the definition itself is, in traditional grammars, identified as a “modal infinitive” or an “infinitive of purpose.”<sup>28</sup> Given this construc-

23. Duchamp’s *Fountain* may, indeed, be more than a “gesture” (Cohen’s characterization), but at least to my linguistic intuitions, my *Sprachgefühl*, a chiefly honorific, courtesy, or parasitic sense of “art-work” is employed when it is applied to ready-mades or shells displayed as decoration. Some parasites can, of course, be exceedingly interesting and beautiful (think of the mistletoe!).

24. See John Brough, “Who’s Afraid of Marcel Duchamp?” in *Philosophy and Art*, ed. D. Dahlstrom (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 119–42. Brough argues that Dickie, in an attempt to countenance ready-mades, weakens this requirement, conflating it with mere utensility.

25. Dickie, “The New Institutional Theory of Art,” in *Aesthetics: A Critical Anthology* (1989), 201f.; *The Art Circle*, 77f. Dickie makes no reference to Heidegger but, by not privileging artwork, artist, or artworld in their mutual relations and thereby confirming the circularity of definitions of art, he repeats a claim made by Heidegger in his 1935 address on art. See *Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1986).

26. *The Art Circle*, 10: “. . . I want in this book to maintain that being a work of art is a status. The view of art as a status which I now wish to defend, however, conceives of this status not as being conferred but as being achieved in another way.”

27. *The Art Circle*, 8, 12ff., 43; Dickie addresses the subject of evaluation in *Evaluating Art* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).

28. The modal infinitive indicates necessity or fitness, while the infinitive of purpose

tion, it is difficult to understand how the classificatory sense of “artwork” can be considered “more basic” and distinguishable from at least some minimal evaluatory sense.

The difficulty can be put in rather traditional terms. Something is an artwork not because it can be presented (appreciated); rather, it can be presented (appreciated) because it is an artwork. Presentability (appreciability) is, in Scholastic terms, an *accident* of artworks, allowing us to identify possible artworks, but not to differentiate them unmistakably from other artifacts. That, however, the artifact is intended for appreciation or presentation to the artworld public is, again in Scholastic terms, a *proprium*, enabling us to distinguish artworks from other artifacts. However, this property, far from being the end of the analysis, supposes some ground or reason (*differentia specifica*) by virtue of which an artifact is created for presentation to the artworld public.

The preceding formulation, however, is intended solely for purposes of illustration. It is not meant to suggest that there is some sort of timeless essence to art, identified by its specific difference within a genus. How such an essence could be known or, indeed, what precisely that could mean is exasperatingly obscure. There is no sufficient reason to think that the traditional classificatory (definitional) scheme of genus, species, and specific difference, controversial enough when applied to nature, should have any more application to artworks than does the form/content distinction, proper to implements. I am sympathetic both to Dickie’s rejection of undefinable, primitive terms (thus, the inevitability of circularity in defining art) and to Weitz’s respect for the perennially flexible character of the concept of art (thus, the failure of any *theory* of art). However, meaningful discourse about art takes place, at least for a time, because an artwork is *seen to succeed*. Against Dickie it must be emphasized that something like success or failure is implicit in his definition and needs to be accounted for (within his circular framework and without undermining the good art/bad art distinction). Such success or failure presents itself, like artifactuality, as, in Weitz’s terms, an “unrejectable criterion.”

In defense of Weitz and Dickie, it bears noting that neither is interested in illuminating what it is that constitutes the otherworldliness, the religion of art, described in the first section of this paper. Weitz’s concern is to demonstrate that intelligible discourse about art need not presuppose some theoretical definition of art, and Dickie’s theoretical aim (in the works of his under review) is an exclusively classificatory definition of art. What I want to suggest is that meaningful discourse about art as

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typically follows forms of the verb “make.” The latter infinitive is frequently illustrated with Wilde’s remark: “Women are made to be loved, not to be understood.”

such ("looking and seeing" the way we wield the term "artwork") supposes not simply criteria that are more than classificatory, but an experience of art's achievement. What is the achievement of art?<sup>29</sup>

One answer, which has much to recommend it, is offered by Arthur Danto in his work *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. What differentiates an artwork from an indiscernible counterpart and thus from non-artworks in general is "the fact that the artwork uses the way the non-artwork presents its content to make a point about how that content is presented."<sup>30</sup> The artwork does not simply present its subject, but is significant for the way it presents its subject. Built into the artwork is an intensional structure for which, as with intensional structures in general (e.g., quotations), there is no substitute for the work itself.<sup>31</sup> The artwork succeeds by enabling us, sometimes even forcing us, to see the world through the artist's sensibility. It is as though the artist not only *uses* but *mentions* some medium. This intensional structure is obviously more than meets the eye, indeed, more than can meet the eye, since what meets the eye may have look-alikes that are not artworks (e.g., Duchamp's *Fountain* and one of Mott Works' urinals, both of 1917). In short, "Only in relationship to an interpretation is a material object an artwork."<sup>32</sup>

Extending his notion of basic actions to Schopenhauer's definition of style as "the physiognomy of the soul," Danto construes style as the artist's spontaneous ability of enabling us to see his way of seeing the world, thus at the same time permitting us a glimpse of the artist's soul from the outside. In contrast to a manner that might be learned or a fashion that might be discarded, style is a gift, indissociable from the artist's identity. The artwork itself, by this account, is always metaphorical and rhetorical, presenting *A* as *B* so as to cause us to take a certain atti-

29. What needs to be examined is the purpose and meaningfulness of the classificatory/evaluatory distinction together with the talk of criteria, be they necessary and sufficient or merely a disjunctive set, in regard to art. These *theoretical* devices themselves may sabotage the very attempt to understand or experience art. In that case, not only would a *theory* of art be at odds with art or at least with our use of "art," as Weitz correctly observed; so, too, would the *theoretical* dismantling of the theorizing by recourse to disjunctive criteria. In any case, if an artifact is deemed (even when wrongly) a success, something able to be presented to the artworld, it is not principally because some value or principle of classification, existing independently of the artwork, is invoked or applied.

30. Danto, *Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, 146. So taken is Danto by the problems posed by Duchamp's ready-mades and Warhol's Campbell soup cans, that he considers the issue of discriminating between indiscernibles belonging to different (but not natural) kinds as a paradigm of a distinctively philosophical problem. See also Danto's "Philosophy as/and/of Literature" and "Philosophizing Literature" in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 151f., 170–73.

31. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, 176–89.

32. "Appreciation and Interpretation of Works of Art," in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 39.

tude and have certain emotions toward A.<sup>33</sup> “To understand the artwork is to grasp the metaphor that is, I think, always there.”<sup>34</sup> Understanding the metaphor and being suitably moved are, to be sure, historically conditioned by the knowledge and moral sensibility of artist and audience. Yet, whether appreciated or not, artworks thus express something about the content they represent, even when the perceivable content they represent is identical to the content of some nonartwork. The content or subject retains its identity but is *transfigured*.

Ironically, just as Christ’s Transfiguration prefigures his exodus from this world and his glorification (and ours if we are faithful),<sup>35</sup> so modern art’s transfiguration of the commonplace signals the exodus of art from culture. What Danto calls “the end of art” does not mean the end of art-making, but rather the end of the idea of art. With its ready-mades and Brillo boxes, art has turned to itself for its content and, in the process, become philosophy. Or, at least, according to Danto, this development has confirmed what might be loosely dubbed a version of a Hegelian model of art’s history, a history culminating in art’s absorption into the self-questioning and self-understanding proper to philosophy. On this view, Danto notes, art has a history (its advantage over the “all too thin” theory of art as expression) though not a history of representational progress (abandoned by painters themselves in the face of the novel technology of narrative cinema).<sup>36</sup>

Danto’s use of the term “transfiguration” is intriguing, especially for the theme of the current essay, yet the metaphor limps in decisive respects. After all, Christ’s Transfiguration (μετεμορφώθη) on the mountain was itself a change in his appearance, not his essence or nature (Mt 17:2; Mk 9:2–3), while Danto’s conception of artworks as transfigurations is designed to countenance artworks whose appearance at least may be no different from the appearance of counterparts that are not artworks. Danto speaks of transfiguring, not only in regard to the artworks themselves, but also in regard to the experience of art. But here, too, the notion of “transfiguration” is hardly apt. The greatest metaphors of art, Danto maintains, are those in which the spectator identi-

33. “The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art” and “Language, Art, Culture, Text,” in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 21, 79.

34. *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, 172; see also “Philosophy as/and/of Literature,” in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 154ff., where Danto elaborates how the text becomes a metaphor for the reader.

35. See St. Anselm’s comment on the Transfiguration: “suam suorumque glorificationem praemonstravit,” cited by Arthur Michael Ramsey, *The Glory of God and the Transfiguration of Christ* (London: Longmans, 1949), 119. See, too, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, tertia pars, quaestio 45.

36. “The End of Art” and “Art and Disturbance,” in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 86–99, 117f.

fies with the character represented, thus seeing his or her life through the sensibility of the artist or at least through the lens provided by the artwork; in short, “where the artwork becomes a metaphor of life and life is transfigured.”<sup>37</sup> In the experience of such great metaphors of art, however, insofar as that transference or identification takes place (and “you cannot altogether separate from your identity your beliefs about what that identity is”), the spectator or listener is, unlike Christ on the mountain, transformed and not merely transfigured.<sup>38</sup>

These breakdowns in Danto’s appeal to the significance of “transfiguration”—his metaphor for art as metaphor—are telling, but secondary. Certainly the validity of his philosophy of art-as-metaphor does not turn on the use or abuse of the term “transfiguration.”<sup>39</sup> Yet there is another and perhaps more telling ambiguity to Danto’s provocatively rich reflections. At the conclusion of “The End of Art,” Danto appears to lament the pluralism (“You can cut out paper dolls or do what you damned please. The age of pluralism is upon us.”) that a post-modern world takes for happiness.<sup>40</sup> Art no longer exists, that is to say, art that makes a statement and a difference, since the (end)point of art, graphically demonstrated by the twentieth century, has been to fold over into philosophy. Just as there have always been servile arts, post-historical artmaking will go on, but, like any true missionary, art has put itself out of a job.

This is pretty heady stuff, with implications vitiating the claims about the religion of art, advanced in the course of this paper. There can hardly be a genuine religion of art, if we have indeed come to an art-less age. Of course, if art gives way to or, better, merges with philosophy, perhaps the proper inference is that a religion of art gives way to a religion of philosophy.

However, before jumping to such speculative conclusions, it is impor-

37. See note 31. Scripture scholars suggest that the term *metemorphothe* does not appear in the third account of the Transfiguration (Lk 9:28–36) precisely because it suggests the pagan doctrine of gods changing into men.

38. In one sense, however, Danto’s use of the transfiguration metaphor might be pressed. The Transfiguration has been traditionally interpreted as prefiguring the glorification of Christ and his faithful (see note 32). Thus, those faithful who participate in the mystery of the Transfiguration are transformed.

39. Several aspects of Danto’s splendid analyses, nevertheless, beg for clarification. His study thrives principally on examples drawn from the pictorial and literary arts, leaving a host of questions about the musical arts. Also requiring extensive emendation is the matter of the relation between so-called “expressive” and “aesthetic” predicates. Above all, the role of the artist’s creativity and intentions in the constitution of the artwork’s identity is only tenuously sketched in some brief remarks about style.

40. “The End of Art,” in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 114f.; see also “Art, Evolution, and the Consciousness of History,” in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 210, where Danto styles himself the “prophet” of the philosophers who give us the philosophy for which art has prepared us.

tant to ask what the pluralism in question is and, perhaps more significantly, why Danto emphasizes it. The age is not pluralist by virtue of the thinness of the theory of art-as-expression, since according to Danto the discontinuities of twentieth-century art have overtaken or, rather, deconstructed the aesthetics of Croce and Collingwood. Nor is it pluralist by virtue of the conceptual indeterminacy of "art" (à la Weitz), given Danto's claim that "relationship to an interpretation" is a necessary condition for a material object's being an artwork.<sup>41</sup> Rather, the pluralism Danto finds significant in this age of art-become-philosophy is a pluralism "when one direction is as good as another," when it does not matter what form artmaking takes, since art has evolved to make itself its own content or subject matter. Art no longer has a point (of its own) since its own evolution confirms that it was trying to be philosophy all along. Wistful nostalgia for the heady days of history-making art explains Danto's apparent reservations with post-historical (post-art) pluralism.<sup>42</sup>

Elaborating this end of art in the course of essays the purported aim of which is to contest the political metaphysics that, since Plato, have contributed to the disenfranchising, the insubstantiating of art, is, to say the least, cheekily ironic.<sup>43</sup> Hegel's model of art's historical significance is hardly an anomaly to the warfare Danto otherwise sees being waged between philosophy and art. "*Aber die schöne Kunst ist nur eine Befreiungs-Stufe, nicht die höchste Befreiung selbst.*"<sup>44</sup> Indeed, if Danto's thesis holds, and work like Duchamp's confirms Hegel's vision, then philosophy has finally "won," the enemy having apparently capitulated with the discovery, not only that its tactics are outmoded and its weaponry no match for philosophy, but that, after all, it shares with philosophy a common foe: the darkness of self-ignorance. Danto is, of course, not unaware of the irony of his discussion, yet he leaves it unaddressed, as though it were a brute and brutal fact that the prophet must cry out in the wilderness.<sup>45</sup>

If there is no sustainable alternative to Danto's thesis about the end

41. "Appreciation and Interpretation," in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 39. At the conclusion of "Art, Evolution, and History," however, Danto does suggest that the pluralism takes its stimulus "from the dizzying array of cases." Precisely in this situation the historical end of art makes a universal definition of art possible. Not, of course, that Danto offers one; he is, as he puts it, merely its prophet. See *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 209f.

42. I say advisedly "apparent" reservations since Danto is, as Ingvild Torsen reminds me, enthusiastic about contemporary art. Art conceived as different from philosophy is bygone, but not an art inseparable from philosophy. See Arthur Danto, *After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 198.

43. "The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art" and "Philosophizing Literature," in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 4f., 169.

44. *Enzyklopädie*, §562 Zusatz, 547f.

45. "The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art," in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 16f.



of art, then I am wrong about the religion of art. Just as art replaces religion, the religious experience becoming an artistic experience, so philosophy replaces art and the thesis about the religion of art must be revised into a thesis about the religion of philosophy. Yet philosophy, even a post-modern, post-art philosophy, can no more replace religion than can science, as noted at the beginning of this paper (unless, of course, philosophy can give meaning to the singular and contingent as such).<sup>46</sup> But there is a reasonable alternative to Danto's philosophy of art, an alternative capable of countenancing the developments of twentieth-century art without succumbing to its pluralism and without surrendering art to philosophy. This alternative, furthermore, sustains the thesis of the religion of art by explaining why art, as Kandinsky stressed, is "the mother of our feelings."<sup>47</sup>

What is striking about Danto's conception of art is its close affinity, at least in outline, with that of romantics and idealists. "Transfiguration of the commonplace" sounds like a possible gloss on Novalis's explanation of what it means to "romanticize": namely "to give a higher significance to the commonplace, an appearance of mystery to the ordinary, the dignity of the unknown to the familiar, the semblance of infinity to the finite."<sup>48</sup> Like the romantics, Danto concedes that the rhetorical intentions of the artist may be unconscious and that historicity informs the artwork, from the standpoint both of the artist and of the spectator. Danto's conception of style as the spontaneous externalization of the artist's soul, as already noted, is indebted to Schopenhauer. Most contemporary philosophers of art (Danto is no exception) follow the romantics and idealists in criticizing classical and purely aesthetic analyses of art that center on human existence in nature (or, in the case of traditional aesthetics, the strictly perceptual capabilities of human beings,

46. Indeed, since Danto takes up a version of Hegel's model, it is noteworthy that in the *Enzyklopädie* art and religion remain timelessly—or, better, at all times—necessary forms of absolute spirit, that is to say, neither is eliminated or displaced by philosophy. To be sure, since philosophy is superior, the possibility of bad faith in the practice of art and religion may seem inevitable. What sort of Lutheran was or even could Hegel have been?

47. Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, 10th printing, with an introduction by Max Bill (Bern: Benteli, 1952), 21: "Jedes Kunstwerk ist Kind seiner Zeit, oft ist es Mutter unserer Gefühle." Reflecting on "the mission for art projected by Kandinsky's essay on spirituality," Danto writes: "It was an era whose chief artistic product, I believe, was the manifesto. And if I may bite conjecturally the hand that feeds me, the thesis that art is a means, even the means, to the further evolution of humanity belongs to this stage of thought." See "Art, Evolution, and History," in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 208.

48. Novalis, *Werke und Briefe*, 424: "Indem ich dem Gemeinen einen hohen Sinn, dem Gewöhnlichen ein geheimnisvolles Ansehen, dem Bekannten die Würde des Unbekannten, dem Endlichen einen unendlichen Schein gebe, so romantisiere ich es."



confronted with natural objects), often at the cost of the fragmentary, historical character of human existence.<sup>49</sup>

Yet lying at the center of the romantic conception of art, including its departure from classical theory, is a conception of the creativity of the artist in relation to the artwork, a dimension that Paul Weiss has repeatedly chastised contemporary philosophy of art for ignoring. For the romantics an artwork contains something that nature as such cannot produce and, hence, duplication, emulation, or even elevation of nature cannot be art's aim or the source of its significance, at least not if we are talking about nature insofar as it is the object of theory, science, technology. Artworks embody precisely what cannot be so encountered, namely, the consciousness of the artist. The artwork takes the form of an object, to be sure, but only by virtue of the creativity of the artist. An artwork is thus above all an objectification of pure subjectivity or consciousness. Or, to put it differently: for both romantics and idealists classical theories are decisively overcome only when art makes itself its object, a line of reasoning foreshadowing efforts by contemporary artists to put art itself in question.<sup>50</sup> Other similarities to Danto's view of style and to his account of an artwork as an attempt to cause us to see the world through the artist's sensibility are patent. But for the romantics and the idealists the result is more than a shift in one's point of view or course of action, and there is something else at work in addition to the artist's style and rhetorical skill. The creative unity of the subject and the object in the artwork is a theophany and, in a post-Enlightenment age, the event of a new religion of art, replacing traditional religion and, in a certain sense, even traditional philosophy.

In much this spirit the young Hegel in 1796 penned the following lines: "I am now convinced that the highest act of Reason, the one through which it encompasses all Ideas, is an aesthetic act, and that *truth and goodness only become sisters in beauty*—the philosopher must possess just as much aesthetic power as the poet. . . . Poetry gains thereby a higher dignity: she becomes at the end, once more, what she was in the beginning—the teacher of mankind. . . . Thus in the end enlightened and unenlightened must clasp hands, mythology must become philosophical in order to make the people rational, and philosophy must become mythological in order to make the philosophers sensible. . . . A higher spirit sent from heaven must found this new religion among us; it will

49. For a concise statement of idealist aesthetics, see Dieter Henrich, "Kunst und Natur in der idealistischen Ästhetik," in *Nachahmung und Illusion*, ed. H. R. Jauß (Munich: Eidos, 1964), 128–34.

50. See Henrich, "Kunst und Natur," 130.

be the last and greatest work of mankind."<sup>51</sup> This youthful outburst is certainly not to be identified in every respect with Hegel's mature views. There are many who argue that these words were dictated to Hegel by Hölderlin or Schelling. Nevertheless, these remarks testify to an insight Hegel shared with many of his contemporaries and, in a certain sense, never relinquished: namely, the primacy of an aesthetic way of knowing, at least in relation to the scientific rationality elaborated by the Enlightenment.<sup>52</sup> This insight in fact formally reverses Baumgarten's original characterization of "aesthetics" as the science of the subordinate or inferior cognitive faculties.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, aesthetics for Hegel, in contrast to Baumgarten and to Kant, is identical to philosophy of art, thus underlining the priority of art and the aesthetic. This view, not to be found in any of the mature works of Hegel, is formally adopted by Schelling at least during the year 1800. For Schelling aesthetic production is "the first principle of philosophy," philosophy's "only true and eternal organon," "because it opens up to the philosopher as it were the all holy, where . . . in a sense there burns in a single flame what is severed in nature and history."<sup>54</sup>

Proceeding from the premise that all knowing rests upon the agreement of something objective with something subjective, Schelling maintains that the chief task of philosophy is to explain this agreement, which is nothing short of truth itself. This agreement can be explained by beginning with the objective in general—the philosophy of nature—

51. "Das älteste Systemprogramm des deutschen Idealismus (1796 oder 1797)," in Hegel, *Werke*, I, 234ff.; for a translation, see *The Emergence of German Idealism*, ed. Michael Baur and D. O. Dahlstrom (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), 309f.

52. Cf. Fritz Martini, *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, 17th, expanded ed. (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1977), 319: "Friedrich Schlegel bezeichnete als den Anfang der Poesie, 'den Gang und die Gesetze der vernünftig denkenden Vernunft aufzuheben und uns wieder in die schöne Verwirrung der Phantasie, in das ursprüngliche Chaos der menschlichen Natur zu versetzen.'"

53. It should be noted, however, that Baumgarten does not appear to have considered this science of the inferior cognitive faculties to be itself inferior to logic and the sciences of the higher cognitive faculties; see especially Baumgarten's *Aesthetica*, §1; *Metaphysica*, §533; Alexander Baumgarten, *Aesthetica* (Frankfurt an der Oder, 1750/1758; reprint: Hildesheim/New York: Olms, 1961); *Metaphysica*, 3rd ed. (Halle: Hemmerde, 1750).

54. F. W. J. Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* (1800), with an introduction by Walter Schulz (Hamburg: Meiner, 1957), 297: "Wenn die ästhetische Anschauung nur die objektiv gewordene transendentale ist, so versteht sich von selbst, daß die Kunst das einzige wahre und ewige Organon zugleich und Dokument der Philosophie sei, welches immer und fortwährend aufs neue beurkundet, was die Philosophie äußerlich nicht darstellen kann, nämlich das Bewußtlose im Handeln und Produzieren, und seine ursprüngliche Identität mit dem Bewußten. Die Kunst ist eben deswegen dem Philosophen das Höchste, weil sie ihm das Allerheiligste gleichsam öffnet, wo in ewiger und ursprünglicher Vereinigung gleichsam in Einer Flamme brennt, was in der Natur und Geschichte gesondert ist, und was im Leben und Handeln ebenso wie im Denken ewig sich fliehen muß."

or with the subjective in general—transcendental philosophy. Transcendental philosophy divides in turn into two disciplines, theoretical and practical philosophy, explaining how our thoughts can correspond to things and how things can correspond to our thoughts or, better, our designs and volitions. These two disciplines lead, however, to an impasse. Theoretical philosophy demands subjection to what is objective, practical philosophy the subjection of the objective world to the demands of free subjects. “The contradiction must be resolved, if there is to be a philosophy at all,” Schelling insists, adding that this “supreme task of transcendental philosophy” can be resolved neither in theoretical nor in practical philosophy, but in some “higher” philosophy. That higher philosophy is the philosophy of art. *Art alone* reveals the absolute, the identity between the activity producing the objective world and the activity expressing itself in human willing.<sup>55</sup> The youthful Schelling’s philosophy of art thus stands as a monumental counterinstance to Danto’s claim that philosophy historically has alternated between defusing art and “treating it as doing what philosophy itself does, only uncouthly.”<sup>56</sup> For Schelling philosophy does not disenfranchise art; it is rather art that enfranchises philosophy.

In order to see how Schelling comes to his conclusion, it is necessary to review briefly the principle on which his argument in *System des transzendentalen Idealismus* rests. That principle is a postulate, the requirement to think of oneself thinking. This act of self-consciousness, which is supposed to be a pure consciousness not to be confused with any empirical consciousness, yields an absolute and immediate identity of myself as subject and object, form and content, consciousness and being. This self-consciousness is produced in the very act by which it is known. “The I itself is an object which exists because it knows of itself.”<sup>57</sup> Self-consciousness in no sense exists prior to this act of thinking; it is no thing, no fact, and is objective only for itself. Indeed, there is no normal sense in which it would be appropriate to say that this self-consciousness exists. Because of its unusual character, and because it is no thing and yet is presupposed in knowing any thing, this principle can be known only in a way completely different from the common way of knowing, that is to say, from conceptual and judgmental ways of knowing. Self-consciousness requires an intellectual intuition.

Yet because it is not part of the objective world as such, the identity of subject and object in self-consciousness is only subjective. An intellectual

55. *Ibid.*, 15f.

56. “The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art” and “Philosophizing Literature,” in *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art*, 7, 16, 165f.

57. *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, 37.

intuition is a strictly private affair. As such it is hardly capable of explaining how we can to some extent know and influence things other than ourselves. The purely speculative solution to these first questions of philosophy is nominally given in the intellectual intuition of self-consciousness, but these questions are answered objectively only by art. "The universally recognized and indisputable object of the intellectual intuition is art itself. For the aesthetic intuition is precisely the intellectual intuition that has become objective. The artwork alone reflects me, what otherwise is reflected by nothing, that absolute identity, which even in the I has already severed itself."<sup>58</sup> As Danto has already ably shown, the idealist model of art-as-self-referential seems particularly well suited for understanding a good deal of twentieth-century art. On the youthful Schelling's rendition, however, art cannot come to an end by becoming philosophy, since there is no philosophy without art. To paraphrase Kant, interpretations without intuitions are empty.<sup>59</sup>

The artwork shares with other artifacts the fact that it is produced freely and consciously while at the same time, as with natural objects, there is something decisively unconscious about their genesis. This juxtaposition of nature and freedom with the conscious and the unconscious reworks conclusions reached by Kant. Nature proceeds unconsciously according to mechanical laws and at most the organic products of nature must be construed as if they were based upon some conscious, purposive activity. Freedom is, on the other hand, a conscious, purposive activity, yet striving for a moral self-determination that remains an endless task, never completely achievable. In art, however, in the artwork as well as in the making, consciousness and unconsciousness, human freedom and the natural order, unite uniquely and inextricably.

What, furthermore, unites freedom and nature in art can be attributed neither to the individual nor to nature but, as Schelling notes, to "the freely bestowed favor of a higher nature": the absolute.<sup>60</sup> This absolute is not known through arguments; nor is it something simply present in consciousness. The absolute reveals itself, and its revelation takes place in a fundamental way in art. For the artist or, more exactly, for the genius, the absolute is what fate is for us as moral agents, "an obscure, unknown power," completing and perfecting. "Just as the fated man carries out not what he wants or intends but what he must carry out by virtue of some incomprehensible fate, under whose influence he stands, so

58. *Ibid.*, 294f.

59. Note, however, that they are so-called intellectual intuitions, a notion that chimes with Dickie's and Danto's criticisms of overreliance on perception in understanding art; see notes 10 and 11 above.

60. *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, 284.

the artist, however deliberate he may be, nevertheless, in regard to what is really objective in his work, appears to stand under the influence of a power that separates him from all other men and forces him to articulate and to exhibit things that he does not fully see through and whose meaning is endless."<sup>61</sup> The absolute thus exhibits itself in the artwork as the overcoming of a contradiction, emotionally felt even when less than clearly understood by the artist.

It is not possible here to elaborate further on Schelling's account of art. The account can only be suitably understood within the context of the grand project, shared by the German idealists, of solving the post-Kantian problem of epistemic and ethical skepticism by construing Kant's supreme transcendental principle of self-consciousness as an absolute ontological principle of nature and morality.<sup>62</sup> Certainly, the project strikes us today as exotic and, in the wake of the anti-Cartesian polemics of Heidegger and Wittgenstein, its appeal to consciousness or subjectivity perhaps even wrong-headed. Schelling himself later modifies the bold claims he makes for art in relation to philosophy. Nevertheless, for all his speculative excess, Schelling gives us an insight into something missing in the careful analyses offered by much contemporary philosophy of art: the dynamics of that creativity that expresses itself in the artwork, that overcomes or holds out the promise of overcoming the separate and divided spheres of artist and public. Only appeal to some such creative power explains the religious character of art—for the artist and for the public—and only by explaining the religion of art can the identity of art be explained.

The emotional hold over the artist is the way the artist knows the creative power of something absolute. It is a distinctive kind of knowing, an emotional knowledge with a seductive clarity that heaves forward and shrinks back in the execution; knowledge neither by acquaintance nor by inferential understanding, but knowledge through intimacy. Beyond the limits of science as defined by Aristotle and Kant, through intimacy the individual and the inner sense shed their opacity. But the condition of the possibility of intimacy is creativity. For all its spontaneity, intimate knowledge takes time and discipline, requires taking risks and taking care; if anything, it fuses style and manner; the artist devoutly yields to the constraints of paint or clay, words or notes, attendant, waiting for the response only the medium can provide. To be sure, in this emotion-

61. *Ibid.*, 284, 286. At least in emphasis, Danto's account seems to overlook this necessity of looking beyond the intentionality or subjectivity (style) of the artist.

62. See, for example, "Verhältniß des Skepticismus zur Philosophie," in *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie*, in Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4, 235f.

al surrender the artist forgets herself, and it is appropriate, with Danto, to say that the artist's style is in a certain respect unconscious to the artist herself. Yet the intimacy just as surely heightens the artist's awareness of herself and her style, her groping toward something that is more than her individuality or her style, and creatively beckons her to paint or compose. This emotional knowledge is expressed in the artwork, but then it hardly suffices to say that it is an expression of the artist's subjectivity or style—any more than it would to say intimacy is a private accomplishment. It is not the artist, the artist's style or the artist's genius, that constitutes creativity; it is creativity that constitutes the artist.

When we are moved to draw or compose, sing or dance, we interrupt time in time, capturing for a time more or less successfully what moves us even as it moves on. When this happens, we are artists and not manufacturers or drones. There are, finally, no artworks without artists. Artworks themselves are our children, having our likenesses and genetic make-up, bearing the imprint of our styles, but also having their own fate, their own meaning, their own reality. They tell us about ourselves, about our finitude, and they reveal our dependence upon a creative power transcending our dreams and deeds.

## Chapter 15

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### HEGEL'S QUESTIONABLE LEGACY

From *"legatus"* and *"legare,"* the English term "legacy" once signified the function of representing some authority or, more often, the message or group sent to do so, a significance that survives in the uses of "delegate." A delegation is, of course, not the same as the authority itself or its power and therein lies a source of myriad possibilities of slippage, confusion, and intrigue. The tensions of this obsolete meaning reverberate in the current use of the term "legacy" to designate "anything handed down by an ancestor or predecessor" (OED). Dead ancestors cannot literally "hand" down anything and yet a legacy is an affirmation of them, nonetheless, as the source of a "hand-me-down." Hence, not unlike the obsolete meaning of the term, a legacy occupies a nether region, defined by neither the sheer presence nor the sheer absence of the authority in question. Different from past and present, it can neither be defined in terms of past or present alone nor be defined without them. Something comparable applies to efforts to determine a legacy, attempts to relate the present—itsself a moving target—to a past that is untouchable. This process is hardly exotic or esoteric, to be sure, but there is also no getting around the presumptuousness, the lack of humility that it betrays. To determine a legacy is to presume to take up a position that is neither simply our own nor simply that of the source of the legacy but one to which both must defer. In this process we cannot help being "beside ourselves."

The effort to preserve something's passing is as commonplace and mysterious as remembering. Whenever we remember anything, we are effectively establishing that something continues, however obliquely or remotely, to be a part of our lives. Determining a legacy is a way of registering what we cannot forget, commemorating some achievement that still makes a difference to us. To this extent, determining a legacy would seem to be little more than a redundancy if remembering the legacy were not also a way of redeeming it and ourselves in the process. This sort of self-preservation and self-redemption, which requires a passing

or demise in some respect, is precisely one of the senses of what Hegel famously deemed the *Aufhebung*. “*Aufhebung*” is Hegel’s technical term for a negation that, far from consigning what is negated to the null class, proves to be ultimately a self-negation, absorbing itself and its complement in a unifying, ultimately self-reflective process.<sup>1</sup>

The ubiquity of *Aufhebung* for Hegel must be taken seriously and not only because it crosses and constitutes thresholds of nature and mind, system and history, art and science. It must be taken seriously because its very ubiquity seems to foreclose one kind of fundamental inquiry into Hegel’s legacy, the sort of inquiry capable of entertaining its obsolescence and impotence, of determining and to that extent perhaps terminating it. Here I have in mind not so much particular details of Hegel’s encyclopedic system as his practice and conception of philosophy, that is to say, his way of thinking (his method or logic) and the project that guides it.

There are, of course, ample historical indications that Hegel’s legacy is, at least in many of these respects, unquestionable and persistently efficacious. According to Giorgio Agamben, Hegel’s notion of negativity survives in Heidegger’s analysis of *Dasein* with its distinctive negativity of being-toward-death; in Heidegger’s notion of *Ereignis* Agamben finds the same sort of grounding negative dimension.<sup>2</sup> Not that the line of thought leading to Heidegger is the necessary or only path of Hegel’s legacy. In the early twentieth century, thinkers as different from one another as Lenin and Dewey, Lukacs and Cassirer acknowledge a profound debt to Hegel. More recently, sustained readings of Hegel’s works can be found on both sides of Richard Rorty’s useful divide between private and public thinkers, sublime ironists like Heidegger and Derrida and beautiful souls like Habermas and Gadamer.<sup>3</sup> Yet if the attempt to determine Hegel’s

1. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 80: “Das *Aufheben* stellt seine wahrhafte gedoppelte Bedeutung dar, welche wir an dem Negativen gesehen haben; es ist ein *Negieren* und ein *Aufbewahren* zugleich; . . .”; Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 94: “Was sich aufhebt, wird dadurch nicht zu Nichts. Nichts ist das *Unmittelbare*, ein Aufgehobenes dagegen ist ein *Vermitteltes*; es ist das Nichtseyende, aber als *Resultat*, das von einem Seyn ausgegangen ist. Es hat daher die *Bestimmtheit*, aus der es herkommt, noch an sich.” Hegelian negation amounts not to “-A:” but to “non-A,” calling for the complete, self-reflexive unity of “A & non-A.”

2. Agamben dubs this grounding negative dimension “the Voice”: “Ma, in quanta questa Voce (che scriveremo d’ora in poi con la maiuscola per distinguerla dalla voce come mero suono) ha lo statuto di un *non-più* (voce) e di un *non-ancora* (significato), essa costituisce necessariamente una dimensione negativa. Essa è *fondamento*, ma nel senso che essa è ciò che va *a fondo* e scompare, perché l’essere e il linguaggio abbiano luogo.” Giorgio Agamben, *Il linguaggio e la morte* (Turin: Einaudi, 1982), 48f.; on Heidegger’s closeness to yet also differences from Hegel in regard to negativity, see *ibid.*, 9–12, 51, 57, 126–31; *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*, trans. Karen E. Pinkus with Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 35; on the Hegel-Heidegger nexus, see *ibid.*, 3–5, 37, 72, 101–4.

3. See Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univer-



legacy exemplifies what he construes as the self-redeeming character of thought and reality, then there is reason to wonder whether the legacy has genuinely been put in question. Nor is it obvious how it could be put in question, given the positive role that Hegel assigns to negation.

Among thinkers of the past century, none is more sensitive to this issue of the questionability of Hegel's legacy than Derrida. He cheekily acknowledges the "absolute proximity" of *différance*, the central notion of his early writings, to Hegel's notion of *Aufhebung*. In the late 1970s Derrida was even moved to declare that today's philosophers (i.e., France's philosopher-civil servants) belong to "*the age of Hegel*."<sup>4</sup> Derrida concedes that Hegel in a sense "exhausted the discourse of philosophy," making it questionable whether anything can be said which *exceeds* it.<sup>5</sup> The *Zweideutigkeit* of Hegelian dialectics in Derrida's mind is evident in the opening chapter of *On Grammatology* as he addresses metaphysicians' traditional practice of according writing and language, with all their contingencies, a second-class, derivative status. Derrida links this practice to the naïve notion of an unmediated and *thus* private yet normative ("originary" and/or "transcendental") presence in advance of all signs and other detours (mediations). Derrida singles out Hegel as the epitome of such metaphysicians who efface differences and writing in favor of "the idea of a book, that is to say, the idea of a totality" that can only be such if the totality of what it signifies "preexists it, supervises its

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sity Press, 1989), 67, 78f., 101. Playing the young Hegel off against the old (in a manner reminiscent of Lukacs), Rorty credits Hegel with, "ironically and dialectically enough," helping to "de-metaphysicize philosophy," even while ducking the matter by talking of absolute knowledge (ibid., 79, 112f.). Despite its "ambiguous" ending and Hegel's pretense about observing rather than producing, Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is said to be the turning point, the beginning of the end of the Plato-Kant tradition and the start of the ironist tradition of the likes of Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida (ibid., 78, 83, 104, 125, 134; see, too, "Philosophy as a Kind of Writing: An Essay on Derrida," *Consequences of Pragmatism* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982], 91, 92, 103, 107). In a later essay, Rorty singles out "the early Hegel" as part of the ironist tradition, claiming that "ironist theorizing" remains a subtext in the mature Hegel; at the same time, following Yack, he also attributes to Hegel a recognition of contingency, a recognition not to be found in either Marx or Nietzsche; see "Habermas, Derrida, and the Functions of Philosophy," in *Philosophical Papers*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 308, 317, 321.

4. See Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 44; "The Age of Hegel," trans. Susan Winnett, in *Demarcating the Disciplines*, ed. Samuel Weber (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 1–35; originally published in *Qui a peur de la philosophie?* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977), a collection of essays by the Groupe de recherches sur l'enseignement philosophique.

5. Jacques Derrida, *L'écriture et la différence* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1967), 370f.; *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 252f. Hereafter page numbers of the French text will be followed by a slash and the page numbers of the English translation.

inscription and its signs, and is independent of it in its ideality."<sup>6</sup> But he also insists that everything that Hegel has thought, within the horizon of absolute knowledge, can be reread as a meditation on writing. Hence, he concludes by declaring Hegel "the last philosopher of the book and the first thinker of writing."<sup>7</sup> Given this dual significance, Derrida's contemporaries on the left wondered whether his "infinitesimal and radical displacement" of Hegel moves to a "completely exterior terrain" and, if not, how it differs from Marxist construals of the "rational kernel" of Hegelian dialectics. Pressed in this fashion, Derrida declared: "We will never be finished with the reading or rereading of Hegel, and, in a certain way, I do nothing other than attempt to explain myself on this point."<sup>8</sup> Not surprisingly, Derrida's writings repeatedly wrestle with the problem of putting in question the seductive cunning of a reason that "reappropriates all negativity for itself."<sup>9</sup>

Derrida's sensitivity to the difficulty of questioning Hegel's legacy motivates a host of strategies, designed not to elude or deny it (as though one could simply negate it or take up a position outside it) but to reinscribe it, demonstrating how much more it says than it intends, showing, in other words, how "a complicity without reserve accompanies Hegelian discourse."<sup>10</sup> Following Bataille's lead, Derrida contrasts the particular, self-contained economy of Hegel's *Aufhebung* with a general economy, an excessive, laugh-inducing, unredeeming Hegelianism.<sup>11</sup> Glossing *différance's* absolute proximity to *Aufhebung*, he observes: "Were there a definition of *différance*, it would be precisely the limit, the interruption, the destruction of the Hegelian *relève* [Derrida's translation of *Aufhebung*] wherever it operates."<sup>12</sup> Indeed, immediately after noting that he coins the neoglossism "différance" to mark the original differentia-

6. Jacques Derrida, *De la Grammatologie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1967), 30.

7. *De la Grammatologie*, 41: "Hegel est aussi le penseur de la différence irréductible . . . dernier philosophe du livre et premier penseur de l'écriture."

8. *Positions*, 77.

9. *L'écriture et la différence*, 377f./257; see, too, *ibid.*, 369/251: "Méconnu, trait à la légère, le hegelianisme ne ferait ainsi qu'étendre sa domination historique, déployant enfin sans obstacle ses immenses ressources d'enveloppement." *Ibid.*, 383/261: "Il n'y a qu'un discours, il est significatif et Hegel est ici incontournable." *Ibid.*, 386/263: "À Hegel qui a toujours raison dès qu'on ouvre la bouche pour articuler le sens."

10. *Positions*, 77f., 94; *L'écriture et la différence*, 371/253.

11. "De l'économie restreinte à l'économie générale: Un hegelianisme sans réserve," *L'écriture et la différence*, 369-407/251-77; *De la Grammatologie*, 40: "L'*Aufhebung* est, plus ou moins implicitement, le concept dominant de presque toutes les histoires de l'écriture, aujourd'hui encore. Elle est le concept de l'histoire et de la téléologie."

12. *Positions*, 40; see, too, Jacques Derrida, *Marges de la philosophie* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1972), 21; *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 19. Hereafter page numbers of the French text will be followed by a slash and the page numbers of the English translation.

tion and deferral among signifiers, Derrida adds: "... and above all because *différance*, thus written, in spite of encountering relations of very profound affinity with Hegelian discourse (such as it ought to be read), is able, not to break with it at one certain point (something for which there is neither a meaning nor a chance at all), but to exercise a kind of displacement of it, at once infinitesimal and radical."<sup>13</sup>

Differentiating *différance* from *Aufhebung* can, of course, be construed as reaffirming Hegel's legacy. Therein lies the challenge taken up by Derrida: to indicate how the Hegelian legacy can, nevertheless, be questioned.

Yet why, more precisely, is it questionable whether Hegel's legacy can be questioned? What marks of Hegel's way of thinking seem to lend it an (absolute) status that, so to speak, "goes with and without questioning"? In order to evaluate whether Derrida manages to put Hegel's legacy in question, the first requirement is to give an account of the legacy itself. This endeavor is particularly important if, as suggested earlier, the legacy is identified, not with a particular text authored by Hegel, but with a conception of philosophy that continues to resonate. In what follows I identify four such Hegelian legacies. By no means exhaustive of Hegel's legacy, they can nonetheless be traced to Hegel's conception of philosophy's aims and development of a corresponding method. These legacies embody a mode of thinking of such sweep and saliency that it becomes questionable how we might think or write in a way that places them in question.

(a) *A legacy of suspicion*. Arguably the most influential, if not most important, aspect of Hegel's thought is the way in which, radicalizing an Enlightenment tendency, he casts suspicion on any claims to immediate givenness, be it that of an impression, sentiment, intuition, concept, judgment, inference, style, belief, method, experience, practice, or norm.<sup>14</sup> In Hegel's view, an uninterpreted but epistemically, ethically, politically, aesthetically, or otherwise nonvacuous factor is a myth. This legacy continues in the hermeneutics differently championed by Dilthey, Heidegger, and Gadamer but also in Sellars's account of "the myth

13. *Marges*, 15/14.

14. *Enzyklopädie*, §70, 110f.: "Daß die Bestimmung der Vermittlung in jener Unmittelbarkeit selbst enthalten ist, ist hiemit als *Faktum* aufgezeigt, gegen welches der *Verstand*, dem eigenen Grundsatzes des unmittelbaren Wissens gemäß, nichts einzuwenden haben darf. Es ist nur gewöhnlicher abstrakter Verstand, der die Bestimmungen von Unmittelbarkeit und von Vermittlung, jede für sich, als absolut nimmt und an ihnen etwas *Festes* von Unterscheidung zu haben meint; so erzeugt er sich die unüberwindliche Schwierigkeit, sie zu vereinigen;—eine Schwierigkeit, welche ebensosehr, wie gezeigt, ein im *Faktum* nicht vorhanden ist, als sie im spekulativen Begriffe verschwindet."

of the given" and Quine's exposure of the "dogmas of empiricism," an exposure that has the effect, as Quine himself puts it, of "blurring . . . the supposed boundary between speculative metaphysics and natural science."<sup>15</sup>

One root of this legacy is Kant's famous dictum "Intuitions without concepts are blind, thoughts without intuitions are empty." But Hegel embraced the first half of this dictum far more radically than Kant did. For Hegel refused to accept a range of givens in the critical philosophy (or, more precisely, what the critical philosophy *argues* must be taken as givens): space and time as nonempirical intuitions and universal forms of human sentience; logical forms of judgment and the pure concepts of the understanding (categories) correlated with them; and, not least, the very distinction between sentience and understanding—with all that this distinction entails (rigid separation of phenomenal and noumenal orders, theory and practice, constitutive and regulative principles, causality and purposiveness). In other words, from Hegel's point of view, Kant's philosophy, like that of other Enlightenment thinkers, fails to explain certain fundamental presuppositions on which its own enlightened critiques of dogmatism—metaphysical, moral, aesthetic, political, and religious—rest.<sup>16</sup>

This critique of Kant and other Enlightenment thinkers is a good place to note traces of this Hegelian legacy in Husserl's development of phenomenology as a continuation of the Enlightenment. Throughout his career, Husserl upholds a kind of intuition that, while always rooted in sensible perceptions, is by no means confined to sensibility in the manner of Kantian intuitions or Humean impressions. Husserl investigates the origin of logical forms and categories rather than simply borrowing them from the logical canons of his day. Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and its successors (notably, *Experience and Judgment*) constitute his own *Wissenschaft der Logik*. Moreover, Husserl has a theory to account for

15. Another effect, Quine adds, is a shift toward pragmatism and, indeed, his essay is an argument for a "more thorough pragmatism" than one finds in Carnap and C. I. Lewis. Nevertheless, there is an unmistakably Hegelian ring to Quine's declaration: "The unit of empirical significance is the whole of science." See W. V. O. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View*, 2nd, rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), 20, 42, 46.

16. Hegel is famous for his criticisms of appeals to unmediated faith and intuition in the likes of Jacobi and Kant and, after 1802 or so, his criticisms of Schelling's intellectual intuitions. Yet these criticisms do not amount to a denial of any role for intuition; see n. 50 below. Hegel insists on a role for intuition at the conclusions of both the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and the *Science of Logic*—though talk of an "intellectual intuition" is problematic; in this regard, see Stephen Houlgate, "Schelling's Critique of Hegel's Science of Logic," *Review of Metaphysics* 53, no. 1 (1999): 99–138. Trendelenburg criticized Hegel for surreptitiously supposing intuitions of space and time in what, allegedly, were fully abstract analyses of thought in the *Science of Logic*. But Hegel makes clear that there is an intuition guiding the sequence of those analyses: the history of philosophy.

how we can mean and sometimes know not simply ideas, impressions, or appearances, but things themselves. In moves that replay much of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Husserl not only brackets the natural attitude as well as the sciences, beliefs, and practices that take root in it, but also recognizes the historical horizons and sedimentation of a life-world that is, not simply given, but “pregiven,” already passively synthesized by us before we consciously pass judgments. In all these ways Husserl’s introduction of phenomenology marks a clear departure from Kant’s critical philosophy and betrays striking affinities with Hegel’s project.<sup>17</sup>

(b) *A legacy of mediation.* As noted in the last section, Hegel learned certain lessons of suspicion from the Enlightenment so well that he saw no reason to spare the Enlightenment itself. The problem was not simply that thinkers like Kant failed to examine their own presuppositions, but that, because of this critical failure, they lacked a clear vision of the world for which they were arguing.<sup>18</sup> The ravages of superstition taught Hegel that reason is neither criticism for criticism’s sake nor an exchange of blind faith in religion for blind faith in a cultural amalgam of utilitarianism and positive science.<sup>19</sup> Instead, the upshot of Hegel’s dogged assault on naiveté and “positivity”<sup>20</sup> is a commitment to dynamic, holistic thinking and, correlatively, to the premise that reality is a developing whole, an absolute. An adequately holistic and *thus* self-critical study can ill afford to dismiss the reality of any phenomenon, religion included. Indeed, in the case of religion, such a study must acknowledge its truth and even accord it a certain prerogative for *artfully* calling us back to the absolute.<sup>21</sup>

17. Though Husserl is not subject to exactly the same criticisms that Hegel directs at Kant, Heidegger’s criticisms of the “Enlightenment” character of Husserl’s thought (i.e., its orientation of philosophy to a formal science, its conception of a worldless, transcendental consciousness, and its failure to entertain the senses of “being” that it historically presupposes) echo some aspects of Hegel’s criticisms of Kant. Also, to the extent that Husserl continues to endorse a hylomorphic distinction of sorts (albeit not at the ground level of consciousness) and to the extent that essences are ultimately given in intuitions (albeit eidetic intuitions resulting from expertise and practiced, free variation), his conception of phenomenology is open to familiar criticisms from a Hegelian point of view.

18. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 413: “Wenn alles Vorurteil und Aberglauben verbannt worden, so tritt die Frage ein, *was nun weiter? Welches ist die Wahrheit, welche die Aufklärung statt jener verbreitet hat?*” This basic criticism extends to so-called “post-Enlightenment” thinkers as well: see *Enzyklopädie*, §74, 114: “Jener Verstand, der sich von dem endlichen Wissen, der *Verstandes-Identität* der Metaphysik und der Aufklärung, losgemacht zu haben meint, macht selbst unmittelbar wieder dieser *Unmittelbarkeit*, d.i., die *abstrakte Beziehung-auf-sich*, die abstrakte Identität, zum Prinzip und Kriterium der Wahrheit. *Abstraktes Denken* (die Form der reflektierenden Metaphysik) und *abstraktes Anschauen* (die Form des unmittelbaren Wissens) sind ein und dasselbe.”

19. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 428f.

20. See Hegel, “Die Positivität der christlichen Religion,” in *Werke*, I, 104–229.

21. See the preceding chapter, “The Religion of Art,” of the present volume.

"Full mediation entails self-mediation": so might the Hegelian principle of all principles be written. Hegel's affirmation of this principle is evident in what he calls "the absolute idea," "the sole object and content of philosophy." Philosophy's task is to grasp the various forms that the absolute idea takes inasmuch as "it contains every *determinacy within itself* and its essence is to return to itself through its self-determination or particularization."<sup>22</sup> The novelty of Hegel's view is that the absolute, in all its ab-soluteness (ab-solving), its difference from everything finite, remains very much underway, a "self-determining and self-realizing movement."<sup>23</sup> Hegel has been rightly touted as taking motion and becoming seriously, considering them irreducible and fundamental, like few philosophers before him. Thus, in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, after noting that "the truth is the whole," Hegel adds that this totality by no means should be understood as lacking in difference, movement, and mediation. As thinkers and philosophers, we share in, indeed, we epitomize, this absolute movement. Recognizing oneself in manners of being that are absolutely different from oneself is, as Hegel puts it, the very basis of science.<sup>24</sup>

Yet, as suggested by these last remarks, the reflexivity and movement signaled by the principle "full mediation entails self-mediation" also applies to mediation itself. Hegel accordingly declares: "It has been hereby shown to be *factually* false that there *is* a knowing that is unmediated, be it with something else or in it with itself. It has been similarly explained that it is factually untrue that thinking proceeds *only* through—finite and conditional—determinations *mediated by something else* and that this mediation itself does not just as much cancel [*aufhebe*] itself in the mediation. But the *Logic* itself and the *entire philosophy* is the *exemplification* of the *fact* of such knowing that proceeds neither in one-sided immediacy nor in one-sided mediation."<sup>25</sup> Self-mediation means that mediation itself is mediated, putting itself in check in a process that is anything but aimlessly indefinite ("das *Schlecht-Unendliche*"). There is an affirmative, genuine sense of infinity that is reality in a higher sense.<sup>26</sup> In this respect, Hegel's holism is the counterpart of Hume's mitigated skepticism: a mitigated or, better, self-mitigating holism. Herein, too, lies an impor-

22. Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 236.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 19: "Denn die Vermittlung ist nichts anders als die sich bewegende Sichselbstgleichheit, oder sie ist die Reflexion in sich selbst, das Moment des fürsichseienden Ich, die reine Negativität oder das einfache Werden." *Ibid.*, 22: "Das reine Selbsterkennen im absoluten Anderssein, dieser Äther als solcher, ist der Grund und Boden der Wissenschaft oder das Wissen im Allgemeinen."

25. *Enzyklopädie*, §75, 114f.; see, too, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 12, 248–53.

26. *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 21, 136.

tant clue to the meaning of the (in)famous remark in the foreword to the *Philosophy of Right*: "the real is rational, the rational real."<sup>27</sup>

We are used to identifying Schelling, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche as the philosophers who declare the fundamentally volitional character of reality. But Hegel's account of the thoroughly mediated character of things, a mediation so complete that it extends to itself, reveals a structure strikingly akin to what these philosophers ascribe metaphysically to the will and to what Nietzsche, in particular, defines as the will to power that succeeds by self-denial.<sup>28</sup> Thus, as Hegel sees it, individuals and communities alike participate in a self-overcoming whole, both unconsciously and consciously, even as it tragically and cunningly leaves them in its wake.

In my foregoing remarks about Hegelian suspicion, both learned from the Enlightenment and turned against it, I noted his strategy of deposing rather than simply disposing of religion. But if religion is in certain respects a casualty of Hegel's holism, so, too, is the privileged position sometimes accorded to art, of which he writes: "As far as its highest vocation is concerned, art is and remains for us a thing of the past."<sup>29</sup>

27. In my office there is a cartoon that I found somewhere, depicting left-wing and right-wing pigs slugging it out. Looking on in amusement while leaning comfortably against a tree, with pipe in one hand and a *Stein* of beer in the other, is a Hegelian pig (not me, it's in the cartoon!). The cartoon might be seen as picturing yet another implication of the Hegelian distrust of immediacy, namely, a penchant for recognizing that, for every position, there is an opposing point of view with strengths of its own. But the cartoon also raises the theoretical specter of sitting on the sidelines, the resignation that philosophy is only for night owls when day's work is done (see *Enzyklopädie*, §6, *Zusatz*, 38f.). In fact, Hegel's critique of the divisions that populate traditional ethics, with its contrast of normative and descriptive domains, sometimes leaves his readers in the uncomfortable position of not knowing precisely where he stands. Without attributing this historical turn of dialectical thinking to Hegel himself, it is not difficult to see how one of its legacies can be an evasion of responsibility, smugly certain of the oppressiveness and short-sightedness of all normativity and "sovereign" in its insistence on letting a thousand flowers/differences bloom and die. For a defense of the view that Hegel's thought contains a practical philosophy, despite his supposed "ambivalence" toward ethics, see Allen W. Wood, *Hegel's Ethical Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 8–14. Derrida insists, it bears noting, that deconstruction transgresses the work of neutralization by overturning the classical hierarchy and displacing the system in general as a means of intervening in a field of discursive and nondiscursive forces; see *Marges*, 392/329; also *L'écriture et la différence*, 402f./274.

28. See Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1972), 175: "Im vorigen Abschnitt [der "Einleitung" der *Phänomenologie des Geistes*] sagt Hegel, die Erfahrung sei die Bewegung, die das Bewußtsein selbst an ihm selbst ausübe. Die Ausübung ist das Walten der Gewalt, als welche der Wille des Absoluten will, daß es in seiner Absolutheit bei uns anwese."

29. Hegel, *Werke*, XIII, 25: "In allen diesen Beziehungen ist und bleibt die Kunst nach der Seite ihrer höchsten Bestimmung für uns ein Vergangenes. Damit hat sie für uns auch die echte Wahrheit und Lebendigkeit verloren und ist mehr in unsere Vorstellung verlegt, als daß sie in der Wirklichkeit ihre frühere Notwendigkeit behauptete und ihren höheren Platz einnähme."



Art no longer satisfies our spiritual needs, that is to say, it does not provide the religious satisfaction that, for peoples of the past, was most intimately connected with art. "The beautiful days of Greek art like the golden age of the late Middle Ages are over."<sup>30</sup> The import of Hegel's account, however, is neither a return to the Greek ideal nor a quest for transcendence in the spirit of romantic subjectivism. Instead, the end of art is the beginning of philosophy. Although Hegel is sometimes read as the philosopher who subordinates sublimity to beauty,<sup>31</sup> his treatments of art's classical and romantic deaths display an unmistakable awareness of its sublimely ironic character—*ironic* because the artist qua artist cannot appreciate the self-deceptiveness of her deception, *sublimely* ironic because ultimately tragic. Nor is this sublime irony a matter of art alone if philosophy presupposes art.<sup>32</sup>

(c) *A legacy of decentering finite subjectivity and recovering nature and society.* In their affirmation of an absolute beyond subjectivity, Schelling and the romantics emphasized the finitude of subjectivity.<sup>33</sup> By contrast, Hegel continued to insist on the subjectivity of the absolute. Despite this considerable difference, there is agreement between Hegel and these other thinkers on the derivativeness of any finite subjectivity. Much as Dilthey would a century later, Hegel rejected modern attempts to center philosophical arguments in the epistemological or ethical position of finite, human subjectivity. Nor does the Kantian move to a transcendental subject change matters fundamentally in this regard, as far as Hegel is concerned. Indeed, it bears recalling that the very expression "transcendental philosophy" is to Hegel "barbaric."<sup>34</sup>

The *Phenomenology of Spirit* is Hegel's most powerful and influential argument for the derivativeness of human subjectivity. There are two operative distinctions in the work, by means of which one form of finite subjectivity after the other brings itself down to earth: first, the distinction within consciousness between what is in itself and what is for consciousness and, second, the distinction between consciousness in-and-for-itself and for us. Hegel introduces the first of these distinctions by noting that

30. Ibid., 24.

31. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, "La vérité sublime," *Poétique* 38 (1986): 83–116; Paul de Man, "Hegel on the Sublime," in *Displacement and After*, ed. Mark Krupnick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 139–53.

32. For an excellent account of how the Hegelian dialectic, insofar as it displays limits within art, "opens up a logic of delimitation and deferral continuing to our own day," see Martin Donougho, "Hegel's Art of Memory," in *Endings: Questions of Memory in Hegel and Heidegger*, ed. Rebecca Comay and John McCumber (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 139–59.

33. See Manfred Frank, *What Is Neostructuralism?* trans. Sabine Wilke and Richard Gray (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 192f., 199.

34. Hegel, *Werke*, XX, 337.



consciousness distinguishes something from itself, something to which it refers. Hence arises the apparent distinction between something in itself ("the true," "the object") and something for consciousness ("knowing," "for another"). On the basis of this distinction, consciousness puts itself to the test, comparing its object with itself, namely, with its manner of knowing the object. Any contribution from us, Hegel notes, becomes "superfluous"; the only thing left for us to do is "simply look upon" the test that consciousness puts itself through. At every stage of finite consciousness, a lack of correspondence leads it to recognize that what it deemed to be an object (in itself) was really only a way of knowing (only for consciousness); as a result, the former object gives way to a new object, defined by what was formerly taken to be merely a way of knowing. "What is actually called *experience* is the *dialectical* movement that consciousness plays out in itself, both in its knowing and in its object, *insofar as the new, true object springs from it*."<sup>35</sup> In this precis of the dialectical movement of consciousness' experience, one finds structural parallels, once again, with the sort of self-overcoming that for Nietzsche epitomizes human nature. But it also prefigures later attempts in phenomenology—by Husserl and early Heidegger—to give purely immanent analyses of, respectively, consciousness and being-here, analyses in which not only a natural attitude and the sciences based upon it, but even cognitive acts of judgment on the part of a conscious subject or ego are not taken for granted as fundamental.

Hegel acknowledges a discrepancy between the conception of experience that he is presenting and the usual conception. Usually, we experience the inadequacy of our initial views of things thanks to different objects that happen to cross our paths. But in his presentation of experience, the new object comes about precisely through a "*reversal of consciousness*." "It is this circumstance that lends the entire sequence of shapes of consciousness their necessity. It is only this necessity itself or the *emergence* of the new object that presents itself to consciousness without [consciousness] knowing how this happens to it, which for us proceeds as it were behind its back."<sup>36</sup> In this respect, too, Hegel's approach maps out a strategy that would be much imitated. Twentieth-century attempts to decenter subjectivity, to displace it from the structural center of consciousness (Freud), language (Saussure), and myth (Levi-Strauss)—and, indeed, to do so through a series of "reversals of consciousness" in which the initially unreflected way of knowing the object becomes the object, the in itself—represent variants on Hegel's treatment of finite subjectivity. The aim for Hegel, as for some later thinkers, is to achieve a higher level of

35. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 66.

36. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 67f.

consciousness, a "science" of human behaviors, though this is to be attained precisely by not taking what people say they are consciously thinking or doing at any particular level as the final court of appeal.

Yet there is an apparent incongruity between the two distinctions, reviewed in the last two paragraphs, on the basis of which Hegel introduces his manner of investigating consciousness. On the one hand, Hegel emphasizes that the experience made by consciousness is its own test of itself on the basis of its self-distinguishing, such that no contribution from us other than "simply looking on" (*das reine Zusehen*) is needed. On the other hand, he acknowledges that the "dialectical movement" of experience is "our contribution" and "not for the consciousness that we consider." This apparent incongruity, also very much a part of Hegel's legacy, is not solved by the notion that our "contribution" is restricted to "simply looking on," as Heidegger naively suggests: "The contribution does not force something on the experience that would be alien to it. Instead the contribution only brings forth from the experience itself what lies in it as consciousness' manner of being."<sup>37</sup> This gloss probably reflects Hegel's own view of the matter, but it also puts into sharp relief that he supposes an "absolute knowing," that he is able to decenter finite subjectivity only by virtue of identifying an absolute spirit and, indeed, identifying it with philosophy or even himself as philosopher. Thus, absolute knowing, i.e., the philosopher's consciousness, overcomes the distinction between consciousness in itself and for us. The purpose of these critical remarks is by no means to vilify Hegel but rather, in view of the long legs of his analyses of finite subjectivity, to highlight what he himself took to be their necessary presupposition-and-*telos*. To the extent that contemporary thinkers seek to give strictly immanent analyses of human consciousness and existence, even in its process of moving beyond itself, or to identify the passive, unnoticed, or perhaps even unconscious factors on which a finite consciousness rests, these contemporary thinkers, as noted above, continue Hegel's legacy. But each of them is also faced with the apparent incongruity of such an endeavor, an incongruity that Hegel faces by claiming knowledge of what is absolute.

Hegel's efforts at decentering finite, human subjectivity have the effect of reasserting nature in a way that looks for its continuity with and potential for the human world while anchoring human subjectivity in its

37. Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege*, 175. There is also good reason to think, as Tim Brownlee suggests, that the methodological precept of merely "looking on" is intentionally ironic, especially since merely looking on would fail (without further ado) to be self-conscious and self-consciousness is, in Hegel's jargon, the truth of consciousness. In this case there would be no need to look to consciousness' manner of being, as Heidegger suggests; instead what matters is actively acknowledging our role (ultimately clarified as "Absolute Knowing") in conceiving the dialectical transitions between the different shapes of consciousness.

body, its family, and its social, economic, and political context. One may wonder whether our understanding of nature and, perhaps more pointedly, the standing of nature itself are, in the end, always the better for this. So, too, emphasis on social construction and the political telos of intersubjectivity (or at least institutional intersubjectivity, i.e., objective spirit) has led some enthusiasts to overlook the role that Hegel continues to assign morality (notably, individual conscience) within ethical life (family, civil society, and state).<sup>38</sup>

Yet even as students of finite, human subjectivity look outside this theme itself for a new center of gravity in ways that depart from Hegel's approach, certain dimensions of that approach continue to shape their analyses. In Hegel's view and practice, philosophical sciences have the capacity to achieve epistemic closure and they have that capacity because, first, there is a center and, second, the center is consciousness coming full circle (i.e., self-consciousness). Even scientists of nature or society who do not fancy their analyses as particularly philosophical persist in the belief in some closure, however ideal or "in the long run," to their endeavors. Reflecting on the ongoing force of this legacy of Hegel (and many others), Derrida observes: "Even today the notion of a structure lacking any center represents the unthinkable itself."<sup>39</sup> But no less unthinkable is a center that does not account for the scientist herself, for her body, her intentionality, her family, and her polis, a center that would be unable to explain her place in the investigation of it or the implications of the investigation for her. The unifying center to the respective structures (natural, individual, social, etc.) investigated by science may not be, as it was for Hegel, an absolute subjectivity (encompassing a range from the incipient subjectivity of nature to the fully self-reflective subjectivity of the philosopher). Yet philosophical scientists or, better, constructivists (be they naturalistic, evolutionary, pragmatic, and/or phenomenological) continue to demand of themselves what Hegel demanded of art, religion, and philosophy: progressively more perspicuous and self-conscious reconciliations of nature and spirit and, within spirit, of the individual (subjective spirit) and the community (objective spirit).

d) *A legacy of negation.* One final Hegelian legacy, at work in the various legacies reviewed above, is the positive character of negation, understanding, and death. When we negate something, we understand it, but the understanding "deadens" it in an act of analysis that bears more than a superficial resemblance to dissection. Again anticipating Nietzsche, Hegel insists that the life of spirit is a power, but a power only by looking the

38. See the essay "The Dialectic of Conscience and the Necessity of Morality in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*" in this volume.

39. *L'écriture et la différence*, 409/279.

“monstrous power” of negation, the “absolute power” of understanding, and the “most fearful” power of death in the face.<sup>40</sup> Thus, the negative, the understanding, and death are necessary to the life of the spirit, according to Hegel, albeit along with the negation of negation, understanding, and death—all of which, he adds, constitute what he means by the “subject” or “self-consciousness.”<sup>41</sup>

Hegel's logic presupposes the reality of the life of spirit, a reality which, for reasons already noted, forms a developing whole. With a view to this reality, Hegel elaborates a distinctive concept of identity. The whole retains or, better, sustains its identity as an identity of identity and difference. Such an identity is not the empty, formal identity between two tokens of the same type. It is also neither an imposed identity in the sense of a unity introduced into a manifold (e.g., by a Kantian subject) nor a static self-identity (e.g., a Platonic form), maintaining its eternal presence to itself, unaffected by the many and changing instances of it. The identity of the whole is instead the solution to the problem of the one and the many precisely because it is their identity. It is their identity in the sense that it is the subject in which both unity and plurality, one and many can be said to inhere—though only because it itself generates both. The identity of one thing can be determined only by virtue of its difference from something else; hence, its identity is the unity of one and many, of itself and others. But this identity is neither something given nor something produced by or from a foregoing identity and plurality. Instead it generates both sameness and difference out of itself and, not only out of itself, but for itself.

Derrida's acknowledgment of the “absolute proximity” of his notion of *différance* to Hegel's notion of *Aufhebung* is both an admission of the difficulty of putting Hegel's legacy in question and an insistence on the necessity of being able to do so anyway. The closeness of the two notions, elaborated in more detail below, demonstrates that difficulty. Yet, since proximity is not coincidence, Derrida's talk of this proximity is also a way

40. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 25f.: “The activity of severing is the force and work of the understanding, the most wondrous and greatest or, rather, the absolute power. A sphere that rests closed within itself and, as substance, sustains its features, is an immediate and, for that reason, not particularly wondrous relation. But that something accidental as such, separated from its surroundings, something that is bound and actual only in its connection with something else, that something like this acquires its own existence and distinct freedom is the monstrous power of the negative; it is the energy of pure thinking, of the pure ego. Death, if we wish so to name that unreality, is the most fearful thing and to hold the dead fast requires the greatest force. . . . Not the life that shirks in the face of death and preserves itself free of devastation, but instead the life that endures it and maintains itself in it is the life of the spirit. It gains its truth only by finding itself in being absolutely torn apart.”

41. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 127.

of indicating their divergence and, in effect, announcing that the Hegelian economy of *Aufhebung* can be questioned. The remainder of this paper briefly reviews some attempts by Derrida to question Hegel's strategies precisely by "drawing upon them in order to exhaust their resources of meaning."<sup>42</sup> The aim of the exercise is to clarify and demonstrate the sense in which, nevertheless, as exemplified by Derrida, the questionability of putting Hegel's discourse in question remains its legacy.

In Hegel's metaphysics everything finite necessarily moves beyond itself and is accordingly subordinated to the absolute goal of complete self-consciousness, the full presence of the self to itself, culminating in a philosophy that finds itself projected in every logical transition, natural development, and mental activity. Yet, it is also true that philosophy realizes its absolute self-consciousness precisely by finding itself in its other. Finitude and incompleteness are thus necessary to the absolute, self-differentiating process of the Hegelian *Aufhebung* and in this necessity lies *différance's* basic proximity to it.

The degree of proximity can be seen in the grandfather of *différance*: Saussure's insight that "in language there are only differences," that "language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system."<sup>43</sup> No examination of ideas or sounds by themselves can tell us what sounds signify what ideas. A sign is significant (establishing, in the process, the link and thus the determinacy and difference of acoustic image and thought) only by reference to other signs, that is to say, only by differentiating itself from all other signs in the linguistic system. Derrida's *différance* is, in one respect, this Saussurean difference among signs in a linguistic system. Thus, in a move resembling Hegel's wholesale assault on immediacy and his argument for the fully mediated, self-differentiating character of reality, Derrida writes: "The play of differences supposes, in effect, syntheses and referrals which forbid at any moment, or in any sense, that a simple element be *present* in and of itself, referring only to itself. . . . Nothing, neither among the elements nor within the system, is anywhere ever simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces."<sup>44</sup>

But the determination of *this* difference must be endlessly deferred since there is no center or fixed point of differentiation. In order to call attention to this "deferentiality" and, as noted earlier, precisely to differ-

42. *L'écriture et la différence*, 396/270: "Elle [l'écriture de Bataille] puise, pour l'épuiser, à la ressource de sens."

43. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1983), 120. Another avenue for charting Derrida's sense of this proximity is his interpretation of Levinas, an "anti-Hegelian" in whom he sees, nonetheless, a comparable affinity to Hegelian thinking; see *L'écriture et la différence*, 146f./99, 176/120.

44. *Positions*, 26.

entiate it from Hegelian "differentiation," Derrida spells it "*différance*." What might be supposed as a unifying center or a transcendental ordering principle, for example, some structure or meaning that is signified (even if it be the allegedly self-differentiating process of things as a whole) depends upon the sign's differentiation.<sup>45</sup> Precisely in view of the fundamental character of signs, Derrida is critical of metaphysics' traditionally second-class treatment of them, typically in favor of the presence of the signified, epitomized by the idealized presence of a speaker's voice to herself. As noted below, Derrida is critical of Hegel in this respect as well, but not without recognizing in Hegel's analysis of signs a further proximity to his conception of *différance*.

Like Saussure, Hegel follows a tradition, stretching back to Aristotle, of locating semiology in psychology.<sup>46</sup> Also like Saussure, Hegel appreciates the sign's existence at an irreducible, yet arbitrary juncture of intuition and thought (the juncture of a signifier with something signified and/or with a signifying intention). This character of signs and the psychological context of Hegel's treatment of them overlap inasmuch as the psychology of sign-production is, in his view, part and parcel of the self-mediating and, thereby, ultimately self-determining, liberating telos of the human mind. Thus, the process of *Erinnerung*, of internalizing and recollecting a foregoing intuition, preserving its content as an image, is for Hegel an elementary movement in which intelligence provides the image with its own inner time and space. In this process of internalizing our intuitions, intelligence both frees itself (the images, after all, are part of it) from dependence upon something immediately affecting it and af-

45. The presence of nature and the presence of a consciousness to itself, the nexus of acoustic image and concept, signifier and signified, can only be differential relations that constitute a fertile lack of identity and closure. Determinations are the product, not of the unity of some transcendental subject (the presence of a Cartesian, Kantian, or Husserlian consciousness to itself), but of a differentiation of signifiers. These considerations prompt Derrida to confront metaphysics with the question of how it can concede a nonfinitude of interpretations of being and, at the same time, hold on to the idea of a structural center. See *L'écriture et la différence*, 409–13/279–82.

46. Hegel discusses signs in the midst of his discussion of "Representation," the way station between "Intuition" and "Thinking" in his account of "Theoretical Spirit," the first theme of his "Psychology"; cf. *Enzyklopädie*, §§451–64, 445–63. Signs are mental phenomena that constitute a merely individual and, in that sense, ideal self-relatedness and internal freedom ("subjective spirit"). Hegel thus locates the sign, not in an individual *soul's* struggle to distinguish itself within nature ("anthropology") and not in an individual *consciousness's* identical reflection in itself and in the other ("phenomenology"), but in the individual *psyche's* manner of becoming a subject for itself ("psychology"). His specific remarks on signs and language are to be found in his treatment of "Imagination," which itself marks a transition from the inwardization (*Erinnerung*) of intuitions to "Memory" (*Gedächtnis*); cf. *Enzyklopädie*, §§458–60. Contrary to what Derrida sometimes suggests, Hegel accords semiology a subordinate role in his system; on this point, see *Marges*, 81/71, 80/92f., 96/83; Heinz Kimmerle, *Derrida Zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 1988), 47f.

firms its “being-in-itself” (“the first form of universality”). Reproduced as an image by the imagination (*reproduktive Einbildungskraft*), the content of the intuition is no longer saddled by its original singularity and immediacy. Yet, at the same time, the intelligence in which it remains mysteriously stored and potentially accessible is, Hegel notes, a “nightlike,” “unconscious pit” (*nächtliche Schacht, bewußtlose Schacht*). Hegel proceeds to identify representation proper (*die eigentliche Vorstellung*) with a synthesis of the recollected existence and the internal image, a synthesis that reflects the power of the intelligence to externalize its possession, in effect, separating the image “from the simple night in which it is initially sunk,” and further dispensing with external intuition.<sup>47</sup>

Derrida seizes upon this image of a night pit (*“silencieux comme le mort”*) in which intelligence unconsciously stores images at its very inception. Hegel’s use of this image to explain images exemplifies the differential/deferential character of signs generally. It also exposes, in particular, the appeal not only to a hidden or absent source of intelligence itself (*genitivus appositivus*), an appeal that both introduces and controverts the opposition of absence and presence, but also to a source that escapes intelligence’s control. In all these ways, Hegel’s text allegedly says more than Hegel does or wants to say, exceeding the economy of *Aufhebung* and insuring its questionability.

These implications of Hegel’s image of images (a “nightlike pit”) are matched by his symbol or sign of signs. Signs, as Hegel construes them, are not the work of the reproductive imagination where the image’s content is still dependent upon having been given or found. Instead, signs are the work of a productive imagination, a level of intelligence capable of intuiting itself through content taken from itself, yet also bent on determining itself as something beyond these intuitions of itself, as something that exists as a fact. In this effort, “it is a self-expressing, intuition-producing, sign-making phantasy.”<sup>48</sup> To illustrate that the intuition produced is no longer considered as “something immediate or given . . . but as representative of something else,” that it is “a picture that has received into itself as its soul and meaning an *independent* mental representation,” Hegel dubs the sign a “pyramid.”<sup>49</sup>

47. *Enzyklopädie*, §454, 447f. For valuable discussions of these passages, see John Salis, *Spacings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 132–57; David Farrell Krell, *Of Memory, Reminiscence, and Writing* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1990), 205–39; and John McCumber, *The Company of Words* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 220–38.

48. *Enzyklopädie*, §457, 450f.; in the adjoining *Zusatz*, Hegel adds that in this phantasy intelligence is an individuality, a concrete subjectivity, and that, in its activity of unification, phantasy is already reason, formally considered.

49. *Enzyklopädie*, §458 and *Zusatz*, 451f.; cf. *Marges*, 4, 23f. For useful, in some cases crit-



Why a pyramid? A pyramid is a tomb that, as Derrida puts it, "consecrates the disappearance of life by attesting to the perseverance of life." So, too, a sign unites an intuition in which, "for itself" or *prima facie*, there is no appearance of intelligence with a meaning in which the life of the soul perseveres. Hegel presents this semiology in his psychology because sign-making is the expression of an intelligence come of age, an intelligence that, as noted earlier, sees itself and, as Hegel later puts it, is capable of "re-cognizing."<sup>50</sup> In signs, such a level of intelligence is able to express its cognizance of itself as a free and independent reality, precisely because the link between an intuition and a meaning, in the case of signs (in contrast to symbols),<sup>51</sup> is arbitrary. Hence, Hegel describes a sign as "the pyramid into which a foreign soul has been transported and preserved."<sup>52</sup>

Derrida is quick to point out that what appears at first as a traditional move of construing a sign as merely an expression of an internal content is immediately undone inasmuch as the expression that coincides with the creation of the sign is itself an intuition.<sup>53</sup> In this way, the sign supersedes oppositions, otherwise deemed fundamental, such as those between interiority and exteriority, receptivity and productivity, sensibility and intelligibility. Here, once again, a Hegelian account verges on *différance* "which exceeds the alternative of presence and absence," referring "to an order that resists the opposition . . . between the sensible and the intelligible."<sup>54</sup>

Yet Hegel's treatment of signs nonetheless consists precisely in stipulating that the sign's intransigence is overcome by way of a return to the nonsign, "the presence beyond the sign," the soul entombed in the pyramid. In other words, signs are reconfigured into a metaphysical economy of oppositions. Derrida asks why Hegel, mimicking "classical semiology," construes the relationship of sign to truth as that of an absence to a

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ical, commentaries on Derrida's grappling with Hegel, see Geoffrey Bennington, "Mosaic Fragment: If Derrida Were an Egyptian," in *Derrida: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 97–119; John Llewelyn, "Thresholds," in *Derrida and Differance*, ed. David Wood and Robert Bernasconi (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 51–62; Deborah Chaffin, "Hegel, Derrida, and the Sign," in *Derrida and Deconstruction*, ed. Hugh Silverman (New York: Routledge, 1989), 77–91.

50. *Enzyklopädie*, §465, 463f.

51. A recognizable (mimetic or analogical) connection exists between a symbol and what it symbolizes; cf. *Enzyklopädie*, §458 *Zusatz*, 452; Hegel, *Werke*, XIII, 395.

52. *Enzyklopädie*, §458 *Zusatz*, 452. See, too, Hegel's comments on intelligence not only seeing itself, but recognizing an intuition as its own in *Enzyklopädie*, §465, 378. See n. 16 above.

53. Derrida also notes that Hegel's account of productive imagination here resembles an explication rather than a critique of Kant, especially the author of the *Critique of Judgment*; see *Marges*, 90f./78f., and Bennington, "Mosaic Fragment."

54. *Marges*, 21/20, 5/5; *De la Grammatologie*, 41.



presence, a yearned-for presence that would end (annihilate) the yearning absence. “Why is the relationship between sign and truth thus?”<sup>55</sup> For obvious reasons, he adds, this question cannot be understood as itself a question of signification or truth—or at least not in terms of the senses of “sign” and “truth” already presupposed.<sup>56</sup>

The question that Derrida puts to Hegel here has a Pyrrhic quality, as he immediately recognizes. In one sense the question is rhetorical, coming as it does on the heels of Derrida’s demonstration of the questionability of Hegel’s legacy. Thus, he has effectively put Hegel’s legacy in question, not by pretending to negate or overcome Hegelian discourse, but by showing how—as epitomized by its image of the “pit” and its sign of the “pyramid”—it “dislocates itself,” uncovering the inadequacy of traditional metaphysical oppositions (activity/passivity, absence/presence, thesis/antithesis/synthesis) on which it is supposed to rest.<sup>57</sup> Yet Derrida’s question to Hegel (the “why” question above) is not intended to make us look for a sign (a yearning absence) or a truth (a fulfilling, self-mediating presence) that undergirds the relationship of sign and truth—as though we had succeeded in reaching the ends of the system of that relationship. Derrida accordingly acknowledges that the question (“Why is the relationship of sign and truth thus?”) is still formulated “metaphysically,” as though an answer in the form of a present, but unnoticed signification or an absent, but still efficacious origin or goal were sought. Thus, if the questionability of Hegel’s legacy has been demonstrated, if Derrida has succeeded in showing that the differences that carry the *Aufhebung* (or vice versa) displace themselves, “slide” into non-sense, then it is only because the meaning of “questionability” has slid as well.<sup>58</sup>

55. *Marges*, 93/80f., 9/9; Hegel in fact treats the sign *at this juncture* in a purely formal way, as a product of the imagination, abstracted from considerations of content and truth. Moreover, Derrida himself notes that, despite this abstract, psychological treatment, Hegel’s semiology continues to develop and constitutes a significant accessory to the development of rationality, where the truth of the content does matter. But, even with the qualification that the role of signs in Hegel is not exhausted by his thematic treatment of them, Derrida insists on this query.

56. The similarity here with Wittgenstein’s questioning about the relation of language and world or Heidegger’s construal of “talk” (*Rede*) as an existential, irreducible to subject or world, is patent.

57. *L’écriture et la différence*, 371/253, 382f./260f.; see Martin Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1982), 37: “Für Hegel ist die Sache des Denkens der Gedanke als der absolute Begriff. Für uns ist die Sache des Denkens, vorläufig benannt, die Differenz als Differenz.” See, too, *Marges*, 20f./19: “Rapport entre une différence qui retrouve son compte et une différence qui manque à retrouver son compte, la *mise* de la présence pure et sans perte se confondant avec celle de la perte absolue, de la mort.”

58. This elision does not prevent Derrida from pressing “metaphysical” questions about the significance of Hegelian semiology, questions that he “answers” by “marking the ways in which the authority of the voice”—“privilegé donc de la parole sur l’écriture”—“is essentially coordinated with the entire Hegelian system” (*Marges*, 102/88; cf. *ibid.*, 102–27/89–

This Pyrrhic slide of questioning is, of course, the point, as Derrida's review of Bataille's reading of Hegel makes clear. On that reading, Hegel construes human relationships along the lines of a mythical exchange in which, thanks to the mediation of some thing (some commodity and/or mutual recognition), everything invested is recovered by a self-perpetuating and self-enhancing reality. This conception of absolute spirit (which Marx rightly saw as the ghost of capital) betrays a servile mentality that, clinging to its chains and tools (its repressions and its technologies), does everything to limit the stakes—all out of the most serious respect for death. Indeed, in its trope about the positive character of negation, Hegel's philosophy of *Aufhebung* is an attempt to give meaning to death, beginning with its analysis of the master who is prepared to risk death ("the abstract negation") but is redeemed and gains independence only by not dying ("the negation of consciousness which nullifies in such a way that it preserves and sustains what is nullified and, by this means, survives its being-nullified").<sup>59</sup>

Bataille reminds us that this respect and its seriousness are laughable since death, "the privileged manifestation of negativity," reveals nothing.<sup>60</sup> To attempt to give it meaning is to blind oneself to its utter emptiness. In contrast to the slavish, restricted economy of *Aufhebung*, the sovereign, general economy of *différance* is based upon nonrecoverable losses, "a sacrifice without return and without reserve," sufferings and joys that cannot be redeemed. Because the play of *différance*, its differentiating deferral of significances, is not redemptive (at least in the sense indicated), Derrida uses it to translate and thus transform Hegel's notion of *Aufhebung*, thereby putting it in question, though, as noted above, the question is no longer a question of why, no longer a conventional

108). Derrida shows how Hegel conceives the process of the sign as an *Aufhebung*, erasing the spatial intuition and conserving it in a temporal intuition. According to Hegel, "the truer form of the intuition that is a sign," truer, that is, than something given and spatial, is "an existence in *time*" and, as far as its outward determination is concerned, "a way of being-*posited* that proceeds from its (anthropological) own naturalness—the *sound*, the realized expression of the interiority manifesting itself" (*Enzyklopädie*, §459, 369). Inasmuch as the essence of *any* given, intuited object is only at hand and accessible over time, i.e., with respect to what it is for it to have been (*Wesen* as *Gewesenheit*, *to ti en einai*), only an existence in time can properly serve as a sign, that is to say, only an object with an essence where both signifier and signified continue to be present to us as they are when we speak to ourselves.

59. *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 131: "Ihre Tat [killing each other] ist die abstrakte Negation nicht die Negation des Bewußtseins, welches so *aufhebt*, daß es das Aufgehobene *aufbewahrt* und *erhält*, und hiemit sein Aufgehobenwerden überlebt."

60. *L'écriture et la différence*, 377/256f.: "Ce qui est risible, c'est la *soumission* à la évidence du sens, à la force de cet impératif: qu'il y ait du sens, que rien ne soit définitivement perdu par la mort, que celle-ci reçoive la signification encore de «négativité abstraite,» que le travail soit toujours possible qui, à différer la jouissance, confère sens, sérieux et vérité à la mise en jeu. Cette soumission est l'essence et l'élément de la philosophie, de l'ontologie hegelienne."

question with a conventional answer. "The blind spot of Hegelianism, around which the representation of meaning can be organized, is the point at which destruction, suppression, death and sacrifice constitute so irreversible an expenditure, so radical a negativity—here we would have to say an expenditure and a negativity *without reserve*—that they can no longer be determined as negativity in a process or a system."<sup>61</sup> The strategy, once again, is not to negate Hegel's thinking (since that would reproduce it), but to demonstrate how it shows even as it conceals this unreserved negativity. Hence, Derrida renders Hegel's text questionable by reinterpreting it, reinscribing the work of meaning (*genitivus appositivus*), the dialectical syntheses, "in the configuration of a meaningless play," thereby making it "function within the sacrifice of meaning."<sup>62</sup>

By why would we want to sacrifice meaning? The question is, of course, self-defeating since any answer would presume a meaning and the "sacrifice" of meaning would only be episodic or relative. Herein lies the irony of Derrida's efforts to put Hegel's legacy in question.<sup>63</sup> Derrida's ingenious probing of Hegel's prose reinvigorates skeptical sensibilities to the limits of discursive thought. He shows how it is possible and even desirable to question thinking that requires of itself completeness and thus reflexivity and, indeed, to question it without falling back into yet another self-redeeming, meaningful, Hegelian trope. There are unrecoverable losses, unreconcilable differences; discourse's self-referential and neutral economy of presences and absences is subject to the general, excessive, and sovereign economy of *différance*. Yet such losses, such excess and sovereignty only make a difference to someone who has recognized and *submitted* to them, *deferred* to them as her own ("Le conscience de soi est servile")<sup>64</sup>—even if or, perhaps we should say, particularly if there is no final saying or showing of that difference. In other words, if *différance* matters, despite and/or because of its playfulness, then it calls for humility in the players. In such humility, call it "the humility of *différance*," the Hegelian legacies reviewed in the first part of this paper continue to operate and, thus, again in the humility of *différance*, the questionability of putting Hegel's legacy in question remains its enduring legacy.

61. *L'écriture et la différence*, 380/259.

62. *L'écriture et la différence*, 381f./260f.; *ibid.*, 393/268: "La transgression du sens n'est pas l'accès à l'identité immédiate et indéterminée d'un non-sens, ni à la possibilité de *maintenir* le non-sens."

63. Herein lies the kind of double bind we find ourselves in when faced with philosophical questioning: if we do not question it, the questioning stands; but if we do question it, the questioning stands as well.

64. *L'écriture et la différence*, 406/276.

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